



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

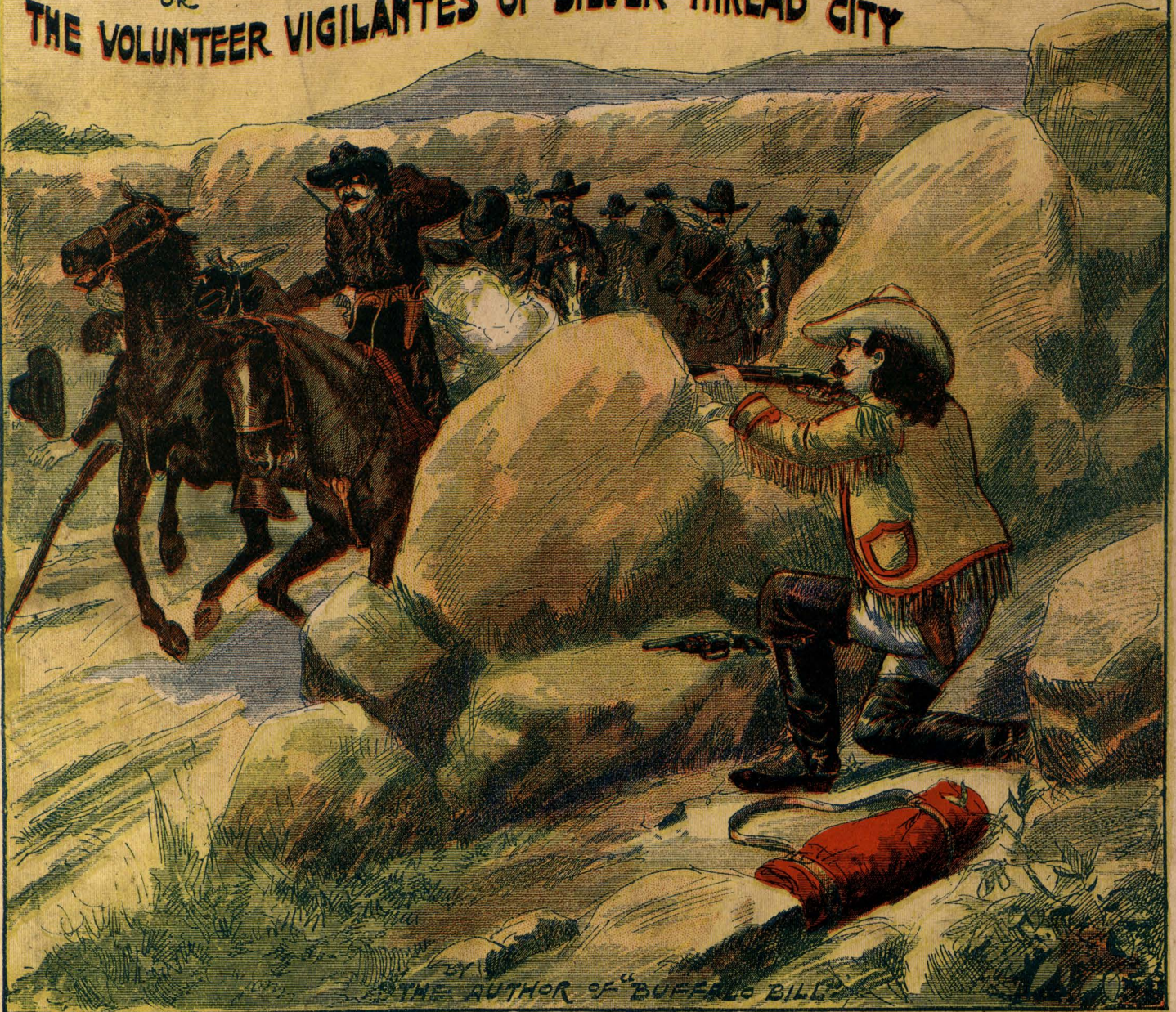
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No. 88.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL AND THE MAN IN BLUE

OR
THE VOLUNTEER VIGILANTES OF SILVER THREAD CITY



THE FIRST SHOT TOLD BY DROPPING AN OUTLAW FROM HIS SADDLE.



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BUFFALO BILL AND THE MAN IN BLUE;

OR,

The Volunteer Vigilantes of Silver Thread City.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

A SCOUTING EXPEDITION.

Buffalo Bill and a companion were riding across the rolling prairie which stretched as far as the eye could reach due westward from the little mining settlement of Silver Thread City.

The great scout's companion was, to say the least, a remarkable looking man.

Dressed from head to foot in blue velvet, with silver trimmings, a broad blue sombrero perched rakishly on his head, which was covered with a thick growth of long yellow hair, and mounted upon a splendid specimen of horse-flesh, the man was a figure to attract attention wherever he went.

Ford Belfont was his name, and he was the owner of several ranches in the neighborhood of Silver Thread City, where he was universally known as the Man in Blue.

Buffalo Bill had arrived at Silver Thread City a short time before with two young men fresh from the East—Dr. Donohue, a young physician, and Allan Tremain, the son

of Judge Tremain, the most prominent inhabitant of Silver Thread City.

He had come to the little mining town on a secret mission, and had met the young men, who had just finished their education at Yale and were going to settle in Silver Thread City.

The scout's mission was to break up a band of robbers and desperadoes who infested the neighborhood and who from their attire were known as the Boys in Black.

The Boys in Black had lost about ten members in a fight with a band of Volunteer Vigilantes which Buffalo Bill had organized, and after that had apparently disbanded.

Of late, however, several robberies and hold-ups had occurred, and it was pretty clear in Buffalo Bill's mind that the Boys in Black had gotten over their scare and were starting in to their business of robbery and murder once more.

Buffalo Bill said nothing about his ideas, however, but in secret he saw that his band of Volunteer Vigilantes, numbering twenty-five in all, of which Dr. Donohue and Allan Tremain, who were already fairly good scouts in

spite of their Eastern bringing up, were members, were kept ready for action.

"Don't say anything about our preparations," he said, at a secret meeting of the band, "but give the outlaws an impression that it will be safe for them to gather again. If we can only catch them in a bunch we'll wipe them out for good."

The following day the scout set out for a little ride over a section of the prairie in which a man had been held up a short time before.

He hoped that he might find some traces that would lead him to the hiding place which he was sure the Boys in Black had somewhere in the vicinity.

He was joined by Ford Belfont, the Man in Blue, but said nothing to him about his real object in setting out in that direction, simply saying that he was out for a canter across the prairie.

"I'm with you, then," said the Man in Blue. "It's a lovely afternoon, and my horse needs exercise."

Together the two jogged across the prairie, talking pleasantly.

At length they caught sight of a single man approaching them on foot.

"See, there is a man coming to meet us," said the Man in Blue.

"Yes, it is old Nemesis Nat, the Hermit of the Range."

"You know him, then?"

"I have met him in my wanderings, and have heard something of his sad story."

"Do you know him?"

"I did years ago, when he was on the warpath as an avenger. His family was massacred by Navahoe Indians, and ever since then he has been on a trail for scalps."

On the side of the trail, calmly awaiting their approach, stood old Nemesis Nat, a weather-beaten, hardened old settler, and as they came near Buffalo Bill called out:

"Ho, Nemesis Nat, how have you been since I met you last?"

"Pretty good, Buffalo, I guesses," and the old man spoke coldly, and, turning to the Man in Blue, said, with considerable sarcasm:

"Well, Blue Jay, is you still prowlin' around after gold, and hain't lost your scalp in the hunt for it?"

"No, nor do I intend to, Nemesis Nat," was the laughing reply of the Man in Blue, who did not seem angered at the way he had been spoken to.

"Well, all I have got to say is that if you goes half a mile further on this trail, you'll run into an ambush that will lay you both out—mark what I says, for I knows that which I tells you," and, shouldering his rifle, Nemesis Nat walked quickly away up the steep mountain-side.

CHAPTER II.

THE INSULT.

The words and manner of the old hermit, Nemesis Nat, seemed a surprise to both Buffalo Bill and the Man in Blue.

The latter appeared to be particularly struck by what had been said, and called out:

"How do you know that there is an ambush ahead, old man?"

The hermit avenger turned, and halting a moment, said with an impressive manner:

"I am self-exiled from my fellowmen. I have a stern duty to perform in avenging those I loved; but I am no fugitive from justice, no outlaw, no renegade, and though I may not care either for your friendship or that of the man with you, I still am of the same race, I am human, and would not see you go into a trap set for you."

"Hence I tell you not to continue on along that trail, for death lurks there," and with this Nemesis Nat again swung his rifle over his shoulder and walked on.

"I say, old man, what is the danger ahead in our path?" called out the Man in Blue.

But no answer came, and again the Man in Blue called out:

"What danger lies ahead of us?"

"Death!"

"I will say no more," and the old man was passing on when the Man in Blue cried quickly:

"Lend me your rifle, Cody, and I will halt him and force him to tell us more."

"I will do nothing of the kind."

"He has warned us, and that is sufficient," replied Buffalo Bill, coldly.

"I am sorry, but we will not quarrel. I go back now," said Bill.

"Do you mean that you will turn back on the warning of that old madman?"

"It is just what I do mean."

"Well, I will not."

"I always heed a warning, come from what source it may."

"And I disregard them, especially from that old fellow. I do not believe there is an Indian ahead in ambush."

"He did not say they were Indians."

"Who can he mean, then?"

"Do you forget that there are outlaws in the vicinity?"

"That is true; but they were badly frightened and have fled to their haunts."

"Perhaps, only several might have waited to see if they were followed, and there are some splendid places for an ambush ahead of us."

"I thought you were a stranger here?"

"To the people, yes, but not to the country, for I scouted through here some years ago."

"Well, I shall go on."

"I advise you not to do so."

"You know no more about it than what Nemesis Nat told you."

"I am a good guesser."

"Well, I shall go on."

"Better take my warning, Man in Blue."

"Why?"

"Well, you might meet a Man in Black who will hold you up, and I see that you wear costly jewels, a watch and chain, and may have money with you."

"I have considerable; but I'll take the chances."

"You may lose your life."

"I'll risk it."

"Then I'll say no more."

"Come, go with me, for two of us need have no fear should me meet any Boys in Black."

"No, I shall go back on the trail."

"You are afraid to go, then?"

"I heed the warning."

"Then you admit yourself to be a coward?"

The insulting words had not left the lips of the Man in Blue before he was covered by Buffalo Bill's revolver, the weapon cocked, the finger on the trigger, and he heard the sternly uttered words:

"Retract those words, sir, or you are a dead man!"

"I mean it!"

And Buffalo Bill's look showed that he was in deadly earnest.

CHAPTER III.

THE SILENT COURIER.

The Man in Blue did not change countenance at the sudden and hostile act of Buffalo Bill, but simply looked squarely into the muzzle of the revolver and then into the eyes of the man he had insulted, and said calmly and in a reproachful tone:

"My dear Cody, it was a slip of the tongue to apply the insulting epithet I did to you.

"I am so accustomed to dealing with men of a different caliber than yours, I spoke generally, and, of course, did not mean it, and your record is too well established for me to belie it. Can I say more?"

"You cannot; but the word coward is as mean an appellation to apply to a man as that of thief, liar or renegade, and I, for one, will not allow a man to brand me so, for I demand one to choose his words. But your apology is all I ask for, and it is forgotten."

And the scout extended his hand, but it was very certain that the epithet was one than rankled yet in his brave heart.

The Man in Blue then said:

"Is it useless to ask you to still go on?"

"Yes."

"You go back, then?"

"I turn back on the trail."

"And if I should run into an ambush?"

"You will have only yourself to blame for it, for you have been doubly warned."

"I thought you were going to say that if I was killed or captured you would raise a band of settlers and avenge or rescue me."

"You have shown yourself pretty able to take care of yourself thus far, Mr. Belfont, but should you get into trouble I will do all in my power for you."

"That is some comfort, at least. Good-by," and the Man in Blue rode on along the trail alone.

Buffalo Bill watched him for a few minutes, and then turned back on the trail.

Then he halted, dismounted, and, taking a pencil and notebook from his pocket, tore a sheet from the latter and wrote the following to Dr. Donohue, his tenderfoot pard at Silver Thread City:

"DEAR DOCTOR:—

"My horse will bear this to you.

"Please stake him out in the little meadow beyond the timber where we fired upon the outlaws.

"He will be safe there, and in a good hiding place.

"Met Nemesis Ned, of whom I spoke to you.

"He warned us of danger around, but the Man in Blue, whom I met on the prairie, pushed on, while I turned back—for a reason.

"Better push your wounded man, and the dead one, for Silver Thread, and put guard of Volunteer Vigilantes over the lock-up.

"I will return when I have found the clew I am now trailing.

"Yours,

B. B."

This note was tied securely to the horn of the scout's saddle, the reins were placed over it, and the horse was started on the back trail.

The scout had taken his haversack of provisions with him, his rifle and blanket, and stood watching the horse as he went along at a canter, the pace that Buffalo Bill had started him off at.

Having watched the animal out of sight, Buffalo Bill smiled grimly, and muttered:

"You will not find me so much of a coward as you implied, my dear Man in Blue, only I will not herald my approach by going on horseback and get yanked out of my saddle by a lariat, or knocked out by a bullet.

"Old Nemesis Nat was playing a double game in some way, for I marked him well, and there is something ahead on this trail for an honest man to shun.

"But I'll find out just what it is, very nearly as soon as the Man in Blue does, but not as he will, perhaps."

So saying, Buffalo Bill swung his haversack to his belt, threw his rifle across his shoulder, and slowly went along the trail taken by the Man in Blue, his field-glass in his hand and his eyes searching every yard of the way ahead.

CHAPTER IV.

VIGILANTES IN THE SADDLE.

When Judge Tremain, the chief man, heard that Buffalo Bill had started on the trail after the Boys in Black alone, he lost no time in looking up the first lieutenant of Buffalo Bill's Volunteer Vigilantes, a daring young borderman named Kent, and he hailed him quickly with:

"Ho, Kent, you are the very man I wish to see."

"Yes, judge, I am at your service, sir," said the young settler.

"You could call out the Vigilantes, could you not?"

"If Captain Cody was away, sir, and there was reason for it."

"Cody is away, and there is reason for it."

"The fact is, Kent, a robbery has been committed recently which Cody thinks is the work of the Boys in Black, who, he supposes, have gathered again. Cody has taken the trail after them alone, without calling out the Volunteer Vigilantes. I have been growing more and more anxious about him, and I really wish you would signal in some of the members and accompany me as a reserve to Cody in case he should get into trouble and need help."

"I will do so, judge, upon your request, for that is sufficient."

"Then, Kent, you ride on into Silver Thread and get any of your band you may find there, while I, who know your men, will halt any that come along and await you at the Range Trail, a mile back."

"In that way we will gain time, and I cannot drive off the feeling that Captain Cody needs aid, starting as he did on that trail."

"I will ride on at once, sir, and be back at the Cross Trails within the hour with any of the men I can pick up."

The judge dismounted, and began to wait for the coming of any of the band who would come by that way, as just there three trails met.

He had not long to wait before a young man came in sight, riding at a gallop.

"Ho, Houston! looking for Kent, I suppose?"

"Yes, judge."

"The Vigilantes have been called out."

"He has gone on into Silver Thread to find others, and you are to wait with me, for others are to come soon."

The two others came along soon, and were halted by the judge, who explained the situation.

It was not long after that three came in a bunch, and

as half a dozen had now reported, the judge mounted and they rode back to the Cross Trails, a point a little further back on the road.

They had not long to wait before they heard the clatter of hoofs coming rapidly along, and soon there dashed into sight Kent and four more of the Volunteer Vigilantes.

"A little late, judge, but we can keep right on, sir."

"I am glad to see you have six of the boys, for now we number eleven Vigilantes and the judge."

"Boys, the judge says that Captain Cody started on the trail of a party of Boys in Black, more than double their number, so we start to their support, as they may need aid."

"Now, forward."

Buffalo Bill had not let his identity become generally known at Silver Thread City, as he feared that if it were known that Buffalo Bill, the scout, were there, the outlaws would be on their guard. He was known to all, save a few, as Captain Cody, an ex-army officer.

The young officer leaped into the saddle, his men followed his example, and the Vigilantes were off on the trail.

CHAPTER V.

THE DUMB MESSENGER.

Allan Tremain and Dr. Donohue, knowing nothing of the calling out of the Volunteer Vigilantes, were riding across the prairie that afternoon when they saw a horse—riderless—galloping toward them. They both recognized it as Buffalo Bill's horse and their hearts sank within them as they looked at the empty saddle.

The young men turned pale with dread, for it seemed to indicate that the scout had been killed or wounded.

They had become greatly attached to the scout, recognizing his noble qualities, and realizing all that he had done for them.

As though conscious that he bore some news of importance, the splendid horse came on with arched neck and halted right before Dr. Donohue, whose eyes at once caught sight of the piece of paper tied to the saddle-horn with a buckskin thong.

"Ah! a message from Captain Cody!"

"I sincerely hope he is not hurt and unable to ride here," and Dallas Donohue hastily unfolded the letter and read what the scout had written, Allan Tremain listening to every word with the same interest that was felt by the young doctor.

"Thank Heaven, he is all right, Doc."

"Yes, Allan, but how long will he be, going on as he does alone on the trail, and on foot?"

"I wonder what clew he is on?"

"It is hard to tell; but if the Man in Blue did not heed the warning of Nemesis Nat and Cody did, I would say

that he is dogging Belfont to see what he can make out of him."

"It would appear so. I could see that Cody had a suspicion against him that something was wrong."

"I noticed that also; but the Man in Blue is all right, and Cody is wrong in that quarter."

"Maybe, but I shall wait and see."

"I only wish we had some of the Vigilantes here to go after the scout."

"So do I—but hark!"

They listened for a minute, and Dr. Donohue said:

"That is the sound of horses in a gallop—listen!"

They soon heard the thud of a number of hoofs, and at once were on their guard, for who, or what they were who were coming they could not tell.

"We may have to fight for it, Allan."

"Yes; but they are on the trail coming from Silver Thread."

"You are right, so they cannot be foes."

"I hope not; but little did we dream when at old Yale we would have such adventures as we have met on the frontier."

"Why, they call football dangerous at Yale, but here it is dangerous to be alive, and the men who die natural deaths lie few and far between; but here come friends or foes, so stand ready for a fight or a footrace."

"It is neither, for I recognize the judge."

"Hurrah! there are a dozen of our Vigilantes with him, and there is Kent also."

The band of Vigilantes, with the judge and Lieutenant Kent at their head, rode rapidly up to the spot where the young men stood and came to a sudden halt.

"This looks like hot work," said Allan. "Are the Vigilantes called out?"

Judge Tremain told about his fears for Buffalo Bill's safety and his calling out the Vigilantes.

Then the letter of Buffalo Bill, sent by his dumb messenger, was read and commented upon.

The Vigilantes decided that it would be best to push on after their chief, and, if he was in danger, rescue him from it.

So on went the band of Vigilantes, each one of them, save the doctor and Allan Tremain, being experienced plainsmen, and being as well able to follow a trail as an Indian.

Judge Tremain had been urged by all to return, and he had done so, feeling assured that the Volunteer Vigilantes on the trail, he could return home and feel no further dread regarding Buffalo Bill.

They had found the spot where the Man in Blue had parted with Buffalo Bill and were making their way through a wide canyon, when suddenly, from a short dis-

tance ahead of them, they heard rapid firing, and Allan Tremain called out:

"There is deadly work ahead, men, for that is the ring of Buffalo Bill's rifle."

CHAPTER VI.

BUFFALO BILL CORNERED.

When Buffalo Bill had sent his horse back with the note to Dr. Donohue, he watched the animal until he was out of sight.

Then he turned, and, glancing down the trail, muttered to himself:

"I am like a Comanche, a great deal braver on horseback than afoot."

"I am playing a bold game, but it's to win or lose, and you bet I am on this trail to camp, for I cannot drive the kink out of my mind that I am being fooled by some one."

"Well, we shall see," and Buffalo Bill strolled on along the trail taken by the Man in Blue.

Afoot he could hide himself, when, had he gone on horseback, it would have been impossible for him to do so.

He could go on foot in many places when he could not have ridden, and then the fall of a horse's hoofs would have been heard by a keen ear quite a distance off.

Creeping from rocks to rocks, timber to timber, yet holding generally the course taken by the Man in Blue, Buffalo Bill continued on his way for a couple of miles and had seen no sign of danger lurking in his path.

Coming through a wide canyon, with a stream flowing through it, and precipitous sides, the scout said to himself:

"If they are lying in wait it is at the head of this canyon."

"But the trail of the Man in Blue goes on, and so will I," and he swung down into the canyon with a step that was quick and untiring.

He came to a meadow in the canyon that was nearly a mile in length, and he halted and looked long and earnestly ahead with his glass.

There was no going around, unless he went many miles out of his way, and the canyon's sides where the meadow was were steep and would not afford a hiding place.

One third of the way across there was a group of rocks, the only shelter the scout could find all the way.

"Well, I must risk it, trusting to luck that the outlaws are not camping in the pass just beyond the meadow," he said, and he kept on his way.

It was an unpleasant feeling that crept over him, the thought that he was being watched, and at one moment he was about to turn and go back.

But he overcame the intention and pressed on, at last coming to the pile of rocks one-third of the way across.

Here he halted, and, taking up his glass while he lay in hiding, he began to searchingly regard the trail ahead.

Nothing met his view, not even a coyote or bird being visible.

"Well, I must go on, for I do not believe that I am seen," he said.

He was gathering his things together to move on, when his ears, possessing the sensitive hearing of a hound's, caught the sound of distant hoofs.

At first he could not catch just the direction the sound came from, whether from behind or before him, the rock walls of the canyon resounding so; but at last the sound grew louder, and he suddenly said:

"Well, I'll have to run for it, or stand at bay here.

"They are coming back over the trail, and are outlaws, for they can be no one else.

"Ha! there they come into view.

"I might make a run for it, and reach the cover of the hills, but I'll stand at bay and trust that they will go by and not see me—Ah! that will be impossible, for there are a dozen of them, and they will surely see me.

"Yes, Buffalo Bill, you are cornered this time, and it is a fight for life."

The face of the scout grew stern as he spoke, his eyes glittered with an angry light, and he placed himself in the best position he could to escape observation and at the same time be ready to fight to the death.

The scout seemed to fully realize that a desperate struggle was before him, and as he need expect no mercy from the outlaws, he meant to give none, to fight them in their own merciless way.

As he crouched there among the rocks at bay, his face did not move a muscle as he beheld one after the other a dozen outlaws come into view, all dressed in black, masked, and riding horses the hue of jet.

Buffalo Bill had been right. The Boys in Black were again on the trail.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VIGILANTES AT WORK.

Buffalo Bill watched the outlaws closely as they came on at a rush, riding in compact mass.

"I do not believe they have seen me, or know that I am here.

"They will find it out very suddenly, for I cannot expect to escape being seen, as the trail passes each side of the rocks.

"I guess I'll begin in time to let them know that I am here."

On came the outlaws at a run, coming straight along the trail toward the scout's position, and riding in close order.

"I could shut my eyes and pick them off out of that bunch," grimly muttered the scout.

Nearer and nearer they came until Buffalo Bill felt that he would soon be discovered and that he must act.

The eyes of Buffalo Bill brightened with a determined, menacing light as he glanced along the barrel of his repeating rifle and pulled trigger.

"One, two, three, four, five!" the shots were counted by the scout as they were fired upon the advancing outlaws.

The first shot told by dropping an outlaw from his saddle, the second wounded another, the third killed a horse and the fourth and fifth brought down another man and horse, while the wild cry of Buffalo Bill rang out with defiance to his foes.

That the Boys in Black had not seen Buffalo Bill was certain, that they had been taken by surprise was equally so.

They saw those deadly puffs of smoke coming from among the rocks, and they drew rein in hot haste.

Several started to fly, but the voice of their leader checked them.

"It is but one man, the same we tried to ambush this morning.

"He has tracked us, so now take him alive!"

The surprised and partly demoralized outlaws seemed to realize that their leader spoke truly, that there was but one man.

"Charge, and take him alive!" yelled the leader, and he got his men together once more and they spurred forward toward the rocks.

But Buffalo Bill had not been idle during the temporary panic of the outlaws, for he had thrown cartridges into the place of those he had fired, drawn his revolvers, and, placing them on the rocks by his side, was ready again to face the terrible odds against him.

But ere the outlaws had gotten fairly under way again, there was heard a loud cheering back on the trail and the Volunteer Vigilantes burst into view.

Buffalo Bill was astounded.

He heard the cheer and turned.

"They are my own Vigilantes," he cried, and in his astonishment he forgot to fire on the outlaws.

The death-struggle had ended in victory for the scout, just as he had given up all hope of life and intended to die game.

The outlaws had again quickly drawn rein at hearing the cheer.

They were not sure that there was not more than one man in their front.

They supposed it was a trap, and that he had planned it with his comrades then coming.

There was but one thing to do, and that was to fly for life.

"We outnumber them, men; stand and fight them!" cried their leader.

But the Boys in Black did not stand.

They saw a force equal to their own in spite of the words of their leader, and they fired a volley at the scout, another at the advancing Vigilantes, and fled.

But not all of them, for Buffalo Bill opened fire again, and the long-range rifles of the Vigilantes answered the fire they had sent at them.

Several men and horses dropped, and then the flight became a running fight, with rapid shots exchanged on both sides, for the Volunteer Vigilantes had gotten down to work; they were striking a blow for revenge.

The horses of the outlaws seemed the fleetest, or were not tired, for they gained well upon their pursuers, and, once they gained the mountains beyond the pass, they scattered in all directions, and the Vigilantes were at fault and could not follow them.

But Buffalo Bill's Vigilantes had begun to hit back.

CHAPTER VIII.

STICKING TO THE TRAIL.

When the Volunteer Vigilantes dashed up they gave their chief three cheers, but he called out:

"On after them, pards, and don't mind me, for I'll follow soon."

His horse was being led by a Vigilante, who soon came up, and, mounting, Buffalo Bill pressed forward rapidly.

But he came up with the Vigilantes at fault, as the outlaws had scattered, as has been said.

There was nothing to do but return over the trail, and a couple of good horses, with their saddles and bridles on were picked up, and a wounded animal was put out of his misery.

"That reminds me that I saw the chief, as he fled, draw rein over the wounded men and fire his revolver down upon them.

"He was determined to let no one fall into our hands who might be bought to tell secrets.

"When they kill their own wounded, to prevent their falling into our hands, you can understand, men, the kind of desperadoes we are fighting," said Buffalo Bill.

Five of the outlaws were found dead upon the field, and, being searched, they were found to be well supplied with money, and this all went into the treasury for the common welfare of the Vigilantes.

The bodies were buried, and a couple of wounded Vigilantes were sent right back to Silver Thread under the care of Dr. Donohue.

When the outlaws were buried, the Vigilantes were congratulated by their chief upon their success, and the scout asked Allan Tremain to thank the judge for having done what he did and helped him out of a serious situation.

"And I owe you thanks, too, Pard Kent, for you did just right to collect the men.

"We have hit the outlaws a return blow, have made them feel that we can strike back and that they shall not feel that it is all their way.

"Mr. Kent, I would camp the men back where you found Dr. Donohue waiting, and signal the rest of the band to come together also, as I shall go on from here on a scout and return to you there with what information I can get."

"Yes, sir, but you will not go alone?"

"Oh, yes, I can do better alone in scouting and will call on you and the men when I need you to act.

"I must get some provisions from some one who has them, and you had better order supplies out to the camp from Silver Thread."

"How about my going with you, Captain Cody?" asked Allan Tremain in a whisper.

"You did not come out here to be buried, Allan, but to enjoy life.

"This making a Vigilante out of you is because circumstances demanded it.

"Scouting is dangerous work, especially after those outlaws, as I came very near discovering to my cost.

"I shall not go mounted, but on foot, and I really believe I will be able to make some discovery of importance, at least I hope so."

"And the Man in Blue left you?"

"Yes, he went on alone."

"And where is he?"

"The Lord only knows, for I don't, but I am going to find out."

"You hold suspicion against him, I see."

"I still am determined to know all about him, Allan; but I wish you to thank your father for sending the Vigilantes to my support, and tell him that if he had not done so, he would have had to write to Colonel Royall that his chief of scouts, sent on a special mission, was lost, strayed or stolen."

"I do not exactly like your going alone now."

"My dear pard, I have scouted two-thirds of my life alone.

"Did I have three of my pards with me that I could name, I would undertake the contract that the four of us would run the Boys in Black to ruin."

"And who are those three, if I may ask?"

"One is Wild Bill, another is Surgeon Frank Powell of

the army, and the other is Texas Jack, but now I must be off before the trails get cold," and Buffalo Bill still continued on in the trail he had been following.

CHAPTER IX.

A STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE.

Buffalo Bill started on the trail of the outlaws alone and on foot, while the Vigilantes were still engaged in burying the dead at the rocks near which they had fallen.

The scout moved on up to the spot where they had divided, and then began to examine the trails with the deepest interest.

He became, in fact, so much interested in one of the trails that he went back as far as the outlaws had been when he fired upon them.

Then he hastened on once more, reaching the hills just at twilight and camping on the trail.

He found a good camping place, built a small fire, had his supper, and, wrapping himself in his blankets, lay down for a good night's rest, for he was tired out with his hard work of the past few days.

He did not have the slightest dread of an attack or of my danger, and slept through the night undisturbed, waking up just in time to be on the trail with the first glimmer of light.

He had evidently made up his mind what trail he would take, for he went straight off on it without hesitation.

Over the range he went, keeping up a brisk and steady walk, still pressing on along the trail he had started out to follow, and toward noon he reached the plains beyond, a rolling, fertile, well-watered country, where the ranchers of the Silver Thread settlement had established cattle ranches.

They were perhaps a dozen in number, and widely scattered, being many miles apart.

In a fine timber grove upon a rise was a ranch toward which Buffalo Bill was making his way.

There was a big cabin upon it of several rooms, a cowboy's cabin down on the stream, a corral for cattle, horses and steers, and the herds were scattered in the meadow land, with several horsemen watching them.

These Buffalo Bill eluded and went straight to the cabin.

A man saw him approaching and ran into the cabin, returning soon after with a rifle.

"Is it peace or war, pard, that you want?" cried the scout as the man came out.

"Who are you?"

"My name is Cody, and I am a settler over in the valley.

"Is this the ranch of Ford Belfont, the Man in Blue?"

"It is."

"I would like to see him."

"He is not here."

"Do you mean it?"

"I does."

"I am sorry, for he started for his home yesterday, and I fear he has met with trouble."

"Oh, the Man in Blue can take care of himself."

"No doubt of that, if he is not trapped; but he is human."

"He's a dandy for taking care of himself, too."

"I believe you; but I am anxious about him, and hoped I would find him here, but I fear that the outlaws have got him."

"What outlaws?"

"The Boys in Black."

"No fear, for he sleeps with both eyes open."

"Well, he left me to come on to his ranch."

"I saw the outlaws, and plenty of them, and they were right on the trail he had to follow, and they had a brush with a party of settlers and got badly worsted, too."

"Good!"

"I wish that we could wipe them out; but it has been the other way in the settlement."

"The Man in Blue has had plenty of time to get here, should have arrived last night, in fact."

"But how about getting dinner?"

The man stepped back nearer to the cabin, and after a moment said:

"All right, you can get dinner."

"I'm all alone, and I don't like taking strangers in."

"What's the matter with calling up the cowboys if you are afraid?"

"I hain't afraid, so come and I'll get dinner and call up the boys when it is ready."

Buffalo Bill refreshed himself with a good wash, took a seat in front of the cabin, and looked searchingly at the place and its surroundings.

He saw that the cabin was well fitted up inside.

There was a cot with mattress and silk bedspread upon it, some paintings and engravings upon the walls, a shelf of books, a table, and any number of weapons scattered about, with a guitar and violin hanging up near the door.

The table was set outside, and the man showed that he was certainly a good cook, whatever faults he might possess.

He took a horn from a peg and gave half a dozen blasts upon it, and soon after three cowboys came up at a gallop.

They leaped from their horses at the stream, hastily washed and combed their long hair, and then came forward and nodded to the scout.

CHAPTER X.

A DESERTED HORSE.

Buffalo Bill greeted the cowboys pleasantly, when the man at the cabin introduced him with:

"Pards, this be a friend o' the boss.

"Ef yer wants ter know his name, ask him, for I has forgot.

"But he fears ther Boys in Black has got ther Man in Blue."

The cowboys burst into a laugh, and one said:

"You bet you is away off, stranger, for the Man in Blue hain't built that way."

"He was yesterday, for I rescued him myself from the outlaws."

The men all laughed heartily, and one of them said:

"Well, he'd 'a' got away if you hadn't rescued him, for he's that kind o' a man, nothin' holds ther Man in Blue when he gits ready to scoot."

"I hope he is so fortunate this time, but his not coming home causes me to fear for his safety."

"Don't you lose no rest fearin' for ther Man in Blue, pard, for he'll be along O. K. when he gits ready to come in.

"Won't he, fellers?"

"You bet!"

Buffalo Bill said no more, but closely watched the men, without appearing to do so, while he enjoyed his dinner as well.

When the cowboys had returned to their duty, the scout asked the man if he could leave a note for the Man in Blue.

After a moment of hesitation he said:

"Yes, come in and write it thar."

He pointed to the desk of the Man in Blue, and, sitting down, Buffalo Bill wrote:

"DEAR BELFONTE:—

"I got anxious about you and came on to follow you up, but had a brush with the outlaws, and a party of settlers got me out of the trouble.

"Decided to come and see if you reached your ranch in safety.

"Am fearful you are in trouble.

"Will trust, however, to see you soon in Silver Thread.
Yours, CODY."

"Now, pard, I will leave the letter right here, and I wish to know if I can buy a horse from you, for I've got a little money with me."

"I don't know."

"Who does know if you don't."

"Just wait a minute and I'll see if my horse is in the corral."

Buffalo Bill noticed that he passed through the cabin to go to the corral, and hesitated in there all of two minutes.

Then he came out, glanced toward the corral and said:

"Yes, my horse is there."

"You will sell him?"

"I guess so."

"What do you want for him?"

"I gave forty dollars for him, and he's a good one."

"I'll give you fifty dollars for horse, saddle and bridle, if the beast is of any account."

"You bet he's a dandy to go."

"Is he shod?"

"Yes, I shod him yesterday."

"Trot him out, and give me the best rig you can for the money, while I wish you would throw in a couple of days' grub for me."

"All right," and the horse was soon brought up and a good saddle and bridle put on him.

The man then gave the scout some provisions, received his money, and said:

"I'll tell the boss you war scared for him."

"I hav'n't entirely gotten over my scare for him yet."

"Which way now?"

"I'll strike for the settlements by a lower trail, for I don't wish to run upon any more outlaws," and Buffalo Bill mounted, and with a nod to the man rode away, muttering to himself:

"This is a pretty fair horse, and I'm sorry I have got to give him up.

"But I guess it is worth it to do so."

He rode on at a rapid gallop, the moment he got out of sight of the ranch, but did not take the trail that he had indicated to the man at the cabin that he would.

He turned off on the trail he had come, going back through the mountains where he would be more than likely to run upon some of the outlaws.

But though Buffalo Bill rode hard across the level country, when he came to the mountains he halted where the trail divided, one following along the base of the range, the other passing over it.

"Here we part, old horse," he said, and, dismounting, he fastened the reins tight around the saddle, started the horse along the base of the mountains, and sent him off on it in a gallop.

Then, shouldering his rifle, he started on foot up the mountain trail, muttering to himself:

"I must fight the devil with fire."

CHAPTER XI.

IN SEARCH OF INFORMATION.

Rested by his halt at the ranch of the Man in Blue, and refreshed by his good dinner, Buffalo Bill climbed the mountain trail with quick and steady steps.

He seemed anxious to search a certain point before

night, though his haste did not keep him from being cautious, and he reconnoitered well ahead of him with his glass, for he knew that he was in a very dangerous neighborhood.

At last the summit of the range was reached, and while halting for rest he looked about him.

Behind him, twenty miles away, was the speck that marked the ranch of the Man in Blue, for he had pressed the horse he bought very hard the fifteen or sixteen mile ride to the mountain.

Upon the other side, beyond the great hills, near Silver Thread Valley, and he could just pick out the little group of cabins that marked the village of the settlement.

"Now to strike for the home of Nemesis Nat, meanwhile keeping a bright lookout that some outlaw don't call me with a gun," and so saying Buffalo Bill followed along the ridge, but where there was no trail.

The sun was yet a couple of hours high, and he kept up his long stride, for he knew that he had all of eighteen miles to cover before nightfall and some of the way would be rough.

Afar off there was a group of peaks, and there he knew was the cabin home of Nemesis Nat, the Hermit Avenger, the man the Navahoes feared as an evil spirit.

The sun sunk very rapidly to Buffalo Bill, but he kept up his steady pace, and it was just growing twilight when he had descended to the canyon among the peaks and took the trail to the cavern of Nemesis Nat.

He remembered the way that the old hermit had shown him, and at last climbed to the shelf that the large cave opened upon, sheltered by the dwarf pines that grew about it.

"Ho, old pard, I am just in time."

The hermit turned quickly, his hands dropping upon his revolvers, as he rose from before the fire where he had been cooking supper.

"Lordy, Buffalo Bill, you gave me a start, for I never heard you coming, and you are the only man who knows the way to my den."

"It would have served you right if I had dropped the supper into the fire."

"Well, I'd have rescued it, for I am very hungry, very tired, and have come to stay all night with you, if you don't mind."

"I'll be glad to have you."

"I was thinking of you just now."

"Yes, think of Old Nick and his imp appears."

"But how are you, old man?"

"All right; and I've got another scalp since I saw you."

"But go to the brook and wash up, and I'll put more supper on and be ready for you, for I know what a hungry man is."

The scout enjoyed his supper greatly, for he had per-

fect health, appetite, and his long tramp to encourage him.

Nemesis Nat lived well, and in his wanderings picked up all kinds of game.

Over in a canyon he had fenced in a rich plot, where he raised potatoes, beets, cabbage and onions, and his coffee, sugar, flour and bacon he got at the posts, so he was able to set before the scout a supper that was very tempting, and heartily relished.

Lighting their pipes after the meal, as they sat outside in the light of a new moon, Buffalo Bill said, in an interested way:

"So you have gotten another scalp since I saw you, Nemesis Nat?"

"No, I won't say that, for I saw you too short a time ago; but since you were here, I mean."

"Ah, yes."

"Another Navaho, I suppose?"

"Yes, one of the Mormon gang."

"I got his horse, too, though I have no more use for a horse than a frog has for a tail, and he's over in the canyon feeding, if you want him, and the Indian's saddle and bridle are there, too—his weapons and scalp are in the cavern."

"Pard, I'll go you on the horse, for I deserted a good one that I bought this morning; but then he served a purpose, and that is all I can ask."

"Now I wish to talk to you."

"Don't be too curious, Bill, for I warn you I won't answer," was the reply of Nemesis Nat.

CHAPTER XII.

BUFFALO BILL AND THE AVENGER.

Buffalo Bill smiled at the words of the hermit avenger, that he would not answer certain questions. He had previously questioned the old man in regard to the doings of the Boys in Black. Nemesis Nat had admitted that he knew something of their secrets, but had refused to betray them.

"Pard, I do not wish you to answer any question you think you should not, or could not conscientiously."

"Fire away, Bill."

"You met me last with a companion?"

"Yes."

"He was known as the Man in Blue."

"He was properly called, to judge from his clothes."

"Ever see him before, Pard Nat?"

"Yes, I've seen him when he didn't know it."

"How is that?"

"You know I frequently hang out on the trails?"

"Yes."

"I have seen him pass."

"What can you tell me about him?"

"Nothing."

"Does that mean that you cannot or will not?"

"I can tell you nothing about the Man in Blue, Bill, but as you were with him you must know something about him."

"I know so little that I am anxious to learn more."

"Let me tell you how I met him and the times I have since seen him."

"I should be glad to hear, Bill."

"Now, Pard Nat, I have just come from his ranch, and he is not there, or, if he is, the man there lied to me."

"I will tell you frankly that when I strike a trail in earnest I like to see the end of it."

"You surely do, Bill."

"The warning you gave us was intended for me, Nemesis Nat."

"For you?"

"Yes."

"I know you."

"Yes, and you know the Man in Blue."

"Why do you say so?"

"I saw a look pass between you and the Man in Blue."

"I read it that he was surprised at your warning, and I felt that the warning was for me, and I took it."

"It was for you, Bill."

"There were no Indians in ambush?"

"Not one."

"They were outlaws?"

"Yes."

"In ambush beyond the pass?"

"Yes."

"I thank you, Pard Nat, for you kept me out of trouble."

"But I did see the look pass between you, and the Man in Blue went on, after trying to force me to go with him; in fact, I resented his words about being afraid to go."

"You afraid, Bill?"

"He don't know you."

"Oh, yes, he knows me, but he was trying to browbeat me into going."

"I turned back on horseback, sent my horse back to the camp, and went on the trail of the Man in Blue on foot."

"I made a discovery, too."

"Well?"

"I found that the track of the horse ridden by the Man in Blue came back to the meadow where I opened on them."

"It turned there and went back with the crowd of horsemen."

"The horse of the Man in Blue did?"

"Yes."

"And the rider?"

"Was masked and dressed in black, so, of course, I could not see him."

"I then decided to let the Vigilantes return to camp, as I might need them; you see I place confidence in you, Nemesis Nat."

"That is right; I will never betray you."

"I went on my way then, on foot, and reached the ranch of the Man in Blue."

"Well?"

"I went there, guided by the track of the same horse, the one ridden by the Man in Blue."

"But you say he was not there?"

"If he was, he did not show himself; but I noticed several times that the man in charge, before answering my questions, evidently held conversation with some one hidden in the cabin."

"You are a close observer, Bill."

"My life too often depends upon close observation for me not to be."

"Well, what do you make out of all this?"

"You will not tell me?"

"I cannot."

"Then I will tell you later, for I am camping on the trail now, pard."

"Now, let us turn in, for I make an early start."

CHAPTER XIII.

UNDER FALSE COLORS.

Buffalo Bill is a man who does his work well and thoroughly, and that was said of him when he was scouting for the army.

He would never leave a trail until he had gotten to the end of it, and risking life with him was a minor matter if he accomplished what he set out to do.

When he left the cabin home of the hermit the next morning the sun was rising, but the two had risen early enough to have a good breakfast before the scout departed upon the trail.

The avenger accompanied him to the canyon where he had the Indian pony, and Buffalo Bill found him to be a fine roan with excellent points.

"He will do very well, and I will buy him from you, Pard Nat."

"No you won't, for I'm not a trader."

"I got the Injun's scalp, and that was all I wanted."

"The horse I do not want or need, so take him."

"I certainly am obliged to you; but say, Nat?"

"Yes, Bill?"

"You have Injun toggerie enough to fit out a camp, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"War-bonnets, clothing, weapons, and such?"

"Oh, yes."

"Any paint?"

"Plenty."

"Well, here is an Indian pony, saddle and bridle."

"Yes."

"Take me back to the cavern, Nemesis Nat, and rig me up as an out-and-out redskin."

"What about your mustache, Bill?"

"I cut my imperial off to come here on a mission to Silver Thread Valley, and I whack off the mustache to play Injun."

"It will spoil your looks, Bill."

"Looks don't go in this game, Pard Nat."

"Don't play it."

"Why?"

"You are going to take big chances I know."

"No, indeed, I am going to keep from getting shot from an ambush, unless you head me off somewhere on the trail and kill me for my scalp."

"No, I'll know you, Bill."

"Well, the Navahoes and outlaws are at peace, are allies, in fact, and I speak fairly well the language of the tribe, well enough to fool a white man, anyhow, and if they cannot understand me my revolvers can be interpreters for me.

"I am going through a part of the country to-day where I am likely to run upon some of the Boys in Black; in fact, I think they are camping on some of the trails.

"When it would be dangerous for Buffalo Bill to go through, the brilliant idea has just struck me that a Navaho chief would be safe, so off goes the mustache and I want you to make an Injun out of me, Nemesis Nat, that will be so real you will want to scalp me for a Navaho."

"You really wish it?"

"I do."

"Come back to the cavern, and I'll metamorphose you so no one would think you were not a Navaho."

"I'm with you, pard," said the scout, in a cheery tone, and the two returned to the cavern.

An hour after Buffalo Bill was completely disguised as an Indian chief.

He had braided his long hair, weaving into the braids pieces of yellow flannel, had cut his mustache off and couple of days' beard, was painted a terra cotta color, face, neck, arms and hands, and had streaks of black, yellow, red and blue war paint over this.

Upon his head he wore a gorgeous war-bonnet, and he was dressed in an Indian costume, moccasins and blanket as well.

His own clothing was wrapped up in a blanket and strapped behind his saddle, and his rifle was hidden under a loose blanket, while his revolvers were stuck in cuts in his buckskin hunting shirt ready for use.

He carried an old rifle with him, a lance, bow and ar-

rows and scalping-knife, and as he mounted his pony Nemesis Nat said, with a laugh:

"Quick, Bill, go away from here before I shoot you for an Indian."

The scout laughed and rode away, taking the trail that would lead him over the range, where he would be most likely to fall in with outlaws, if they had not gone to their retreat after their brush with his Volunteer Vigilantes in the meadow.

"If the Vigilantes go on a scout they'll shoot me for a Navaho, and I must be careful not to give old Nat another look at me, for he could not resist the temptation a second time, I fear."

And thus musing, Buffalo Bill rode on his way.

CHAPTER XIV.

PASSING THE ORDEAL.

With that love of the danger he ran, born of his brave nature, Buffalo Bill went along the trail on the roan Indian pony, with the sincere hope that he would fall in with both an outlaw and a Navaho.

"I would have the advantage in each case," he muttered.

The roan pony he found to be a good animal, and he pressed along at a good pace until he reached the summit of the range.

As he was glancing over the view of the valley spread out before him for many a mile, he suddenly saw a man step out in the trail ahead of him.

He was dressed in black, wore a mask, and held a rifle across his arm, but made no hostile demonstration other than to show himself and await the coming of the supposed Navaho.

"Now I'm in for it," muttered the scout.

But he did not hesitate, and rode straight on, though cautiously, just as an Indian would do.

"Ho, Navaho, come on—me friend, Boy in Black—understand?"

"Me know. Paleface brave in black buckskin—Navaho's friend," said the scout, in exact imitation of the Indian way of speaking.

"You bet I am your friend.

"Look on an honest face and rejoice," and the outlaw unmasked, to the great pleasure of Buffalo Bill, who said:

"Good face, heap good to red man.

"Where chief?"

"He is off on a trail somewhere."

"Where Boys?"

"In camp."

"Where camp?"

"We have a camp half a mile from here, over in that canyon, and I am here on the watch, layin' for a pilgrim that is hunting us, and hunting us hard.

"He was on the trail yesterday, and the chief sent word to rope him in.

"Have you seen any paleface running around loose, Navaho?"

"No see paleface, no, Boy in Black, kill him and take scalp."

"I wish you could tackle this one, for he's a hard one to down, and I've been expecting a shot from him as I waited here, and if I saw him I'd stampe."

"Where pony?"

"Yonder in the thicket, feeding."

"Want see chief."

"I don't know where you will find him, unless you go to camp and wait."

"Many Boys in Black in camp?"

"Almost a dozen."

"No chief?"

"No."

"Where other Boys?"

"Up in stronghold which you Navahoes have visited."

"Yes, me know."

"Boys in Black on trail this way?"

"No, not on this trail, but watching on other trails for the man I spoke of."

"Hands up, my man, for I mean what I say!"

The outlaw saw a revolver muzzle shoved into his face, the voice and words now told him he had been taken in, and he could only obey.

So he held his hands over his head, and in an instant he had a pair of steel handcuffs slipped about his wrists and secured.

"Now open that mouth and swallow this gag."

"My God! who are you?"

"Ever heard of Buffalo Bill?"

"Who has not?"

"Let me make you acquainted with him by introducing myself."

"You are the man we have orders to hunt down—it was said that he was a scout pretending to be a settler in the valley, just to run us down."

"Your information is on the dead level, pard; but now open your mouth."

"Don't gag me, for I'll be quiet."

"Now, obey me."

The scout soon rigged up a gag and tied it in the mouth of the man, putting his black mask over it.

Then he led him to the thicket, where his horse was saddled and bridled, and, making him mount, he secured his feet also.

"Now we'll take a ride, pard, and excuse me if I jog along at a good pace."

Not daring to stick to the trails with his prisoner.

Buffalo Bill decided to make his way along off of them as best he could.

He was just turning off the trail when he caught sight of a horseman coming through the timber a couple of hundred yards away, and who had evidently seen him first.

"It is an Indian—yes, two of them, for there is another," said the scout, aloud, and the heart of the outlaw gave a great bound of hope, for though he could not speak he had heard, and he trusted that the disguised scout would now meet his match and he be rescued.

He saw the two Indians also, and hoping there were more, looked to see what the scout would do, expecting that he would think he had run upon a band of redskins and take to flight.

CHAPTER XV.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY.

"Now comes the tug of war, Pard Outlaw, and if I go down, you come out on top.

"If I come out on top, then there is no chance for you, so pray the way you want it and I guess that will help me."

The words were coolly uttered, and the outlaw felt that he had built without cause; the scout was not a man to desert his colors.

He could only glance at him through the eye-holes of his mask and wonder what he would do.

"Ah! more of them?" coolly said Buffalo Bill, as he saw two more mounted warriors come in sight.

"They are braves, so should obey me, a chief, eh, Boy in Black?" said Buffalo Bill.

He was about two miles from the spot where he had taken the outlaw prisoner, and he felt that he was beyond the sound of firing being heard by those in the camp in the canyon.

As the Navahoes were at war with the palefaces, their presence in that vicinity meant that they were bent on mischief, hunting for scalps or plunder, or perhaps acting as allies for the Boys in Black.

In any case they were to be met as foes, and with four to one against him, Buffalo Bill felt that he could not be too cautious, or too particular in what he did.

The four Indians were coming directly toward him and his prisoner, when the scout had halted, as he was about to leave the trail.

That there were more redskins near was a strong possibility, and the scout was certainly in a most critical situation.

But he did not flinch from it, and calmly awaited the second ordeal he had to undergo, though he muttered to himself in his dry way:

"It begins to look to me that in playing Injun I bit off more than I can chew—eh, outlaw?"

The outlaw hoped that he had, and wished he could have expressed it in so many words.

Ironed, masked and gagged as he was, his feet bound under his horse, he was wholly unable to give the Indians any warning of danger.

He saw that they supposed they were coming upon a chief of their own tribe, and in spite of his own critical situation he admired the scout's wonderful nerve and waited the result with an interest that he felt keenly but could not give expression to.

When the four Indians, for the two behind were coming up faster now, as though to hear what was said and to see what chief they were meeting, came within ten paces of the scout and his prisoner, one of them said something which seemed to interest the other three, for they looked fixedly at Buffalo Bill.

Whether they did not recognize the supposed chief, or suspected some trap, Buffalo Bill did not wait to see, for suddenly his hands shot forward, each grasping a revolver, and both weapons began their deadly music together.

Down went an Indian from his saddle, a second one rode forward to grapple with his foe, a third was wounded, and the fourth turned back down the trail uttering loud cries as he did so.

The cries were instantly answered back down the trail by several voices, and Buffalo Bill knew that he was in for it, that he could make no mistake, and threw no shot away then.

So another Indian fell, but the third was almost upon him and fired his rifle as he came on, while the fourth redskin, having called for help, now came back to join in the fight.

At the shot from the Indian, Buffalo Bill had dropped from his horse, down behind him as a shelter, and had drawn his rifle from where it hung in the blanket.

But a groan from the outlaw had followed the shot of the Indian, and he had fallen forward upon the horn of his saddle, his bonds keeping him from dropping to the ground.

Buffalo Bill gave a quick glance at him, and then turned to the fourth Indian who was coming on, while several others just then appeared in sight, rushing for the scene of encounter.

But from off the trail on one side a shot was heard and the fourth Indian tumbled from his saddle, while springing into view came Nemesis Nat, who called out:

"I guess we can handle them together, Buffalo Bill!"

CHAPTER XVI.

NEMESIS NAT TO THE RESCUE.

The moment that Buffalo Bill saw Nemesis Nat, he felt that the battle was not lost to him if a dozen Indians appeared upon the scene.

He felt a regret that the shot of the Indian had killed the outlaw prisoner, and he was fully alive to the situation that the camp of the Boys in Black was near enough for a force to come from there should the firing be heard.

While these thoughts flashed through his mind, he was not idle, for quickly securing his horse and that of the outlaw, he had moved to the front with Nemesis Nat, whose rifle was doing deadly service.

When the Indians beheld Nemesis Nat, and from the firing knew that he had some aid, they turned in terror and fled.

"Five scalps more for my string, Bill," quietly said the old avenger, as he approached the scout.

"Yes, pard, and you were in time to save mine, as it looks to me."

"You were doing well when I chipped in, pard, and I only got five of 'em, though I'll take the scalps of your redskins, too."

"You are welcome to them, pard; but how does it happen that you are here just in the right time to help me out?"

"When I like a man, Bill, it is no halfway business with me; and I like you."

"I saw you making a fool of yourself, so wanted to help you out, and so I cut across country and here I am."

"I sincerely appreciate your goodness, old man."

"Don't speak of it, for I get my pay in the scalps here."

"But are you aware that there is an outlaw camp near here—yes, within hearing?"

"So that outlaw prisoner I had told me; but I am sorry he got killed."

"Saved him from the gallows, so he's in luck."

"But I wanted to have a talk with him, and see if I could not get some information from him; but it seems that each one in some way escapes me."

"It would have done no good, Bill, for those fellows can't tell, the way they are fixed, and so don't look for one to betray his comrades for gold or from fear of threats."

"But how about the dead outlaw and the redskin?"

"I suppose we must bury them."

"You bet we won't, for the outlaws will be here, as they must have heard the firing, and—here they come now."

Buffalo Bill turned quickly and grasped his rifle, but the old avenger said in a low tone:

"Don't be a fool, Bill—get on your pony and leave it

to me, but let me get those irons off the man and then just listen to me lie to soft music."

To have attempted to ride off would have brought the fire of the outlaws, when they saw that there had been trouble there, so leaping upon his pony Buffalo Bill calmly awaited the approach of the Boys in Black, while Nemesis Nat took the keys he had thrown at his feet and freed the dead outlaw of his irons, thrusting the latter into his pocket and facing the horsemen as they rode up.

They carried weapons in their hands and were ready for action, one of them calling out:

"Ho, Nemesis Nat, what does this mean?"

The old avenger did not speak until the whole party, nine in number, had halted near and were gazing with wonder upon the scene.

Then he said in the coolest manner possible.

"A family quarrel, that's all."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, as to the merits of the case I do not know, but your pard there, and the redskin nearest him lying there, got into trouble and pulled their guns.

"The white man fired first, and down went the redskin, and, seeing that he had begun work, the Boy in Black kept it up, and it was give and take and hands all round when the chief here tried to check his warriors and save the white man, and they turned upon him.

"I'm a white man, and I go for my own race every time, so I chipped in, and these redskins that are now lying around loose here got away; but the chief did all he could for your pard and for me, too, so I don't want his scalp.

"You don't speak English, chief, but that's about the way of it, wasn't it?"

"Yes, Blue Wing speak English heap little.

"Snow Hair talk straight, bad redskin brave, bad paleface—fight too much," answered Buffalo Bill in a most dignified manner, while he was watching the outlaws with the closest scrutiny.

"Pards, I guess all that is left for you to do is to bury the dead, for I have the scalps.

"The chief here will doubtless tell his people that it was a quarrel between a paleface and redskin, and that I chipped in, so there will be hard feelings I guess all round.

"How it was I didn't kill the chief or he open on me, I don't know; but he had better ride on now and join his people, for somehow my mercy toward a Navaho don't last long.

"Tra-la-la, chief, and you're in great luck to carry your scalp with you.

And the old avenger waved his hand, a movement Buffalo Bill seemed to understand, for he at once rode away down the trail.

"Say, Nemesis Nat, do you think that this trouble will get us into a row with the redskins?" asked the leader of the outlaws.

"No; for the chief will explain it, and they will put it upon me, for every dead Navaho who is found, and no one knows how he died, is laid down to me.

"I'll just see if I cannot pick up another scalp before night—good-by!"

And the Hermit walked off on Buffalo Bill's trail.

CHAPTER XVII.

USEFUL INFORMATION.

Buffalo Bill smiled at the ingenious manner in which the old Hermit had put the affair before the Boys in Black.

He saw that his disguise was not penetrated, that not for an instant was he suspected of being other than a Navaho chief.

The explanation of Nemesis Nat had been regarded as exactly the state of affairs, for no one thought of doubting the old Hermit, and when he walked away they discussed the matter among themselves, hoping that it would not cause the chief to blame them, should trouble follow with the Navahoes.

The chief, as they supposed Buffalo Bill to be, had certainly agreed with Nemesis Nat's statement of the affair, and had tried, the Hermit said, to check his warriors, when they had turned upon him.

He had awaited their coming with no apparent fear, and yet they thought he had ridden off as though he was angry, and hence they felt a certain anxiety over what had happened.

"Well, I suppose all we have to do is to bury the dead and report the trouble to our chief, as given us by Nemesis Nat and the Indian," said the one in charge when the hermit had rode away.

In the meanwhile, once out of sight of the outlaws, Buffalo Bill had halted.

He felt sure that the Hermit would overtake him, so he waited by the side of the trail.

In half an hour Nemesis Nat came along, and as he approached the scout he called out:

"Bill, you look so much like an Injun, I'll draw bead on you yet."

The scout laughed, and replied:

"Pard Nat, I congratulate you."

"Can't I lie to soft music, though, Bill?"

"You certainly can, Nat, and you got me out of a tight place."

"Well, I came on after you to tell you to go back to your band, for, though, like me, you may seem to bear a charmed life, you do not, only your time has not come yet.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN.

"About five miles ahead turn to the right into a blind canyon, just where there is a tall pine, split by lightning.

"Nobody knows there is a canyon there, for you would never suspect it without going right up to the pine tree.

"There's a spring there, grass and wood, so go into camp, and I'll join you later and stay all night, for I want to see what those reds are doing scouting in this range, and maybe I'll get another scalp or two."

"I did expect to go on to camp to-night, Pard Nat, but I'll halt once for your company.

"Yes, and from there on you'll hardly be ambushed as a white man, though you might catch it as a supposed redskin.

"I'll see you soon after night," and the hermit strode away, while Buffalo Bill rode slowly on until he came to the lightning-riven tree.

He turned to the right, off the trail, passed the tree, and suddenly rode right into a chasm which no one would have supposed was there.

The sun was sinking near the horizon then, so he went into camp, and when darkness came on began to cook supper for the hermit and himself.

He had just gotten the meal ready when the hermit walked into camp.

"I'm just in time, Bill, and hungry.

"Well, I went back and saw the outlaws."

"What did they have to say?"

"They are very anxious about their comrade's fight with the redskins, fearing it will get them into trouble and their chief will blame them, and he's a man to stand no nonsense."

"Where is he?"

"Off somewhere plotting devilry, I guess; but I'll give you a pointer."

"Yes."

"The outlaws are to be all called in for a council."

"Well?"

"They have had matters pretty much their own way until you came, and had gotten the settlers terribly frightened.

"But of late their band has suffered. They scattered after your battle with them. The chief, however, has collected them again and they are aware that you are in the field against them and have raised a band of Volunteer Vigilantes. They know they must at once wipe you and your band out, so they are going to meet and plan a way.

"This much I learned, and I put you on your guard—and more, the coach from Trail End City, which was stopped because of the robberies, begins to run through to Silver Thread next Monday, and there are lively times ahead, Bill.

"Now I want my supper," and Nemesis Nat would say no more.

The camp of the Vigilantes was on the alert when they saw, as they supposed, a Navaho chief riding in upon them, but alone.

All was excitement at once, for with the settlers at war with the redskins, what could bring a chief to visit them?

Up to the group rode the chief, and as he drew rein he said, quietly:

"Well pards, what news have you?"

"Captain Cody, by the gods of war!" cried Dr. Donohue, and then all broke out in a cheer as Buffalo Bill laughed and said:

"I fooled you all, I see, but you are not the only ones that mistook me for an Indian, pards, for I deceived both Navahoes and Boys in Black."

Judge Tremain was paying a visit to the camp when Buffalo Bill arrived there, and, needless to say, he was greatly astonished at the scout's disguise. Buffalo Bill lost no time divesting himself of his Indian togs, and began giving orders as to the campaign the Vigilantes were to make against the Boys in Black.

"Now, judge, will you not return home and take command of the settlers in the upper part of the valley, rendezvousing upon your ranch?" Buffalo Bill said when he had outlined the plan of action.

"Mr. Kent will go to the lower part of the valley to command the settlers there, while Mr. Tremain will remain in charge of the Vigilantes here in camp, and of those who are to assemble at the village.

"Each of you will know where to send a courier for reinforcements, if needed, and also to me, if I am wanted, for I shall take the trail again alone, and my camp will be in a blind canyon just back of a tall, lightning-riven tree.

"If I am not there, a man will be there who can quickly find me.

"There may be no danger of an outlaw raid, but we must not be caught napping, and prepared for them we can defeat them."

The arrangements having been made for the different bands of settlers to rendezvous under the commanders named by Buffalo Bill, several couriers were sent from among the Vigilantes to let every one in the settlement be placed upon his guard against danger.

The band of Vigilantes were to remain in camp just where they were, as the best place from which they could move quickly to any point they might be needed.

They were now in full force, save the couriers just sent off, and they would soon return.

Dr. Donohue was anxious to be of service in the field, as well as in his profession, but the scout told him to re-

main with the Vigilantes, where he could be more easily found when wanted.

Though the settlers could turn out a fighting force of nearly two hundred men, so demoralized and cowed had they become by the acts of the outlaws that they never rallied promptly to strike back at their foes.

But, with a new commander in the field, and over two-score Vigilantes bold enough to volunteer for service under him, the faint hearts felt their courage restored to them, while the reports that the Boys in Black had been twice met by the Volunteer Vigilantes and defeated, caused a most liberal number of the settlers to flock to the appointed rendezvous at the call to arms.

So Buffalo Bill rode away from camp, to again start upon a lone trail.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MEETING OF THE MASKERS.

The tocsin had been sounded, figuratively speaking, that called together the outlaw band known as the Boys in Black.

Whoever and whatever they were, they had been notified, in the way that was their wont, that "the faithful" were to assemble on a certain night at a central retreat of the band, and most important would be the reason for calling them together.

The band of outlaws was a large one, when its hangers-on were taken into consideration, for it had spies in the mining camps, among the cowboys on the ranches, in the farming settlement of Silver Thread, along the stage-line trail to Trail End City, and especially in the latter place.

With but few exceptions, a man each in mining camp, settlement or valley ranch, no one but the workers of the band knew their secret retreat.

The "workers" were the ones known as the Boys in Black, and though the outlaws in one way and another connected with the band might number nearly a hundred, they, the men who bore the hardships and dangers, were just half a hundred, and these were under the chief known to his men as "Captain Black," which the band changed to "The Black Captain," as his horse, clothing, mask and gloves were as black as ink.

This same captain of the outlaws was known as a man born to command.

He was a strict disciplinarian, merciless to an offender, generous and kind to those who did their duty as he set it down for them.

By very few of the men had his face ever been seen, and these were known as the "Chosen Few," for they were his special guard, they doing the most lawless work, the hardest riding, and getting the lion's share of all the booty taken.

These, the Captain's Guard, were the ones who would

hold up a coach, raid a ranch, or do any special work, and they were trained under an eagle eye and by a hand of iron.

They were the couriers, too, to call a meeting of the maskers, or to send with orders from retreat to retreat.

As long as the band had been doing well, there was not a shadow of discontent shown by any one, but when the booty and gold were scarce, complaints were made, and those who made them were surely marked as doomed, for in some way they mysteriously disappeared, until Captain Black's will was law, and no man in the band knew whether his best pard was not a spy upon him.

With the element that comprised his band, the Black Captain could only win by the severest discipline and a decided show of cruelty.

His treatment of his foes was an example of what his men might expect from one who was wholly without mercy.

The fiat having gone out that a special meeting of the maskers was called, to meet at a certain rendezvous, there began to drop in at the retreat from early morning a number of men of all kinds, sizes and conditions.

Had one stood there to study faces and character, he would have said, in watching them pass in going to the secret rendezvous, that he could have picked out one or more men among the gang to commit any crime in the catalogue of criminal deeds.

They were men that might have had a mother to love them in infancy, but not after they had begun to prefer crime to virtue.

They were men of the cunning fox type, of the sneaking coyote kind, of the ravenous mountain-wolf stripe, and so on to be compared through the catalogue of meanest animals.

If there was one who had enough honor left in him to do a good deed, the face of not one of those going into the retreat revealed the fact.

It was most assuredly a gathering of the clans of crime, and any and all of them were ready to strike a blow to the heart for gold.

Though only the Captain's Guard wore the masks and sable clothing that gave them their names of the Boys in Black, all who came to the council affected a mask, so that not a face was visible among those who had assembled.

The meeting was in a deep canyon, with wall-like rocks rising a hundred feet on either side, and with large wood fires lighting up the motley band that had assembled at the call of their chief.

Business had not been brisk of late, so the whole force, with few exceptions, had turned out in mask, and it was very well that they had thus shielded their crime-branded brows from even the eyes of their fellows.

The meeting was not to last long, and afterward the men went their separate ways.

They were called together for a purpose, and the chief wanted to see their faces and set them again upon the trail like bloodhounds.

Such was the meeting of the maskers.

But this meeting was one that was more important than any that had been held, for it was for protection and revenge as well as for the love of gold guiltily gained.

But little did the masked crooks of the mountains dream that in that meeting in the wild canyon, that among the masks that shielded their faces, there was one which if seen and known, would have sent terror to their hearts, for in their midst was one uninvited guest.

CHAPTER XX.

A DESPERATE RESOLVE.

Nemesis Nat and Buffalo Bill were talking together in the hermit's cave.

"Buffalo Bill, do you intend to commit suicide?" said Nat, after Buffalo Bill had explained a certain plan to him.

"Oh, no, pard, if I understand that suicide is the intentional killing of one's self."

"Are you tired of life, Bill?"

"You bet I am not."

"You do not wish to pass in your chips?"

"Not until duty demands it, Nemesis Nat."

"Then why do you do such a reckless, foolhardy, desperate act, Buffalo Bill?"

"For the good that may come out of it, Pard Nat."

"Good to others and death to yourself."

"It may be; but I have been soldiering and scouting long enough to know that a soldier and scout belongs to others, his life is at the beck and call of those who wish to sacrifice him that they may live and prosper.

"Mark you, Nemesis Nat, I am not grumbling, for I like the life I lead, only I wish you to understand that I must act for the good of others, no matter what the sacrifice to self may be.

"You follow your creed to kill, avenge your loved ones, and add the scalps of Navahoes to your string, and you daily risk life in this work, which you deem a duty.

"I am here to keep safe the lives of innocent men, women and children, to prevent their being robbed of their hard-earned riches, and I must risk life to do so.

"Now, you are answered why I shall go to this meeting of the outlaw maskers."

"You came here and asked me to aid you, saying that you had struck it rich, and I said that I would do so.

"I told you that the clans of crooks were gathering in larger numbers than ever before, gathering for a council

to arrange a cruel war upon the settlers to avenge the numbers slain by the people of Silver Thread Valley, and frighten them thus into allowing themselves to be murdered and robbed without resistance.

"I have told you that these clans were doubtless to meet in the Devil's Canyon, and that all went there masked, and now you tell me that you will play outlaw and go there also masked to learn just what will be done at the meeting, to spot those you can, and learn enough to counterplot against them, and I tell you, Buffalo Bill, that of all the risks of life you have taken, you are now about to take the most desperate."

"I don't see it that way, Nemesis Nat, for if all are masked, I will not be known.

"On account of your scruples about doing aught to harm those outlaws, who, you say, have been kind to you, I do not ask you to aid me."

"See here, Bill Cody, I am not wedded to the outlaws beyond a divorce.

"I simply say that I will not betray their chief, that I will not, by my act, lead to the gallows those among them who have been kind to me.

"They trust me, and I must not betray, though I feel that they should be checked in their red deeds, that they should never be allowed to go on in their life of crime, death and destruction.

"Only to-day did I see their chief and urge him against further bloodshed and robbery.

"But he laughed at me, and frankly confessed, feeling that I, like himself, was an outcast, that his men were to meet to-morrow and arrange for a blow that would be most deadly.

"You say that you are going to this meeting of the maskers?"

"I am going, Nemesis Nat, if I die for it," was the determined reply of the scout.

The Hermit Avenger was silent for a minute, and then said:

"See here, Buffalo Bill, I owe you more than I do any living man, and as you are determined to go to this outlaw's gathering, it is my duty to save you if I can.

"To do this, as I have myself been to them, but, as I know you will believe me, never as an outlaw, I will tell you just how to enter the canyon, give you a secret word that will protect you if suspected, and also instruct you in other ways so that you may run less chances of being discovered and burned alive at the stake, for the Boys in Black will out-Injun Injun in their cruelty to Buffalo Bill if they find him out."

"I have no doubt of that, Nemesis Nat, but go I shall, and I shall doubtless owe my life to what you tell me.

"Now, I wish to write a letter to-morrow, and I am going to ask you to go and deliver it to-morrow night at

the home of Judge Tremain, for he knows that I was coming to you.

"You need let no one else see you—will you do this for me?"

"I will, Bill, I will."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SCOUT'S LETTER.

The scout slept as soundly that night in the Hermit Avenger's cavern as though the thought of the dread ordeal before him held no place in his slumbers.

After breakfast in the morning the Hermit Avenger asked:

"Are you still determined upon your resolve of last night, Bill, desperate as it is?"

"More than ever, Nemesis Nat, now that I have slept upon it."

"All right, I can say no more."

"That's right."

"Now I will write that letter to Judge Tremain, and to prove to you that I am doing nothing underhand to compromise you I will read it to you."

"My dear Bill, I never would suspect you of an underhand act, even to a foe!" said Nemesis Nat, warmly.

Then the scout wrote with pencil and paper the following letter:

MY DEAR JUDGE TREMAIN:—

"This letter is sent to you by one whom I can trust with my life, and he is to remain in the Blind Canyon, which was to be my retreat, to receive any message that may be sent there for me.

"Please notify the separate bands of settlers to go into camp right where they are, to keep their horses in the best condition, and themselves ready for a quick move, with supplies on hand for several days' use.

"I will notify you in time just when to move, but kindly have couriers ready to dispatch with all speed to the other commands when you get word from me, and have them do the same, as I cannot now tell just which one I will be able to reach, or when the lightning will strike.

"It may be several days, perhaps a week, but the outlaws will move soon, and only by being acquainted with their intentions, and the trails they intend to follow, can we strike them a crushing blow.

"It is to ascertain this that I now start on the trail, so please convince the settlers of the importance of keeping together, post the leaders only, and let no man leave camp, save the couriers you send on messages, and you must be sure of them.

"With respect,

"Yours,

"B. B."

This letter was read to Nemesis Nat, who said:

"Yes, Bill, I'll take it, and it is not too strong.

"In fact, I'll see the judge myself, and impress upon him that he must know his men that he trusts.

"I'll be off as soon as I have rigged you out for your really desperate work, and then I'll hang out at the Blind Canyon, awaiting for any communication that may come there for you. If you run across a Navaho on your trail, just kill him for my sake."

The old hermit then got out from his storehouse of odds and ends a different suit for Cody to wear, the dress and rough boots of a miner, slouch hat and all.

The scout had already a mask, such as the Boys in Black wore, but he dared not go in a black garb, such as the Chosen Few wore.

Then the Hermit Avenger told him just what trails to take, and what to do, with a great many particulars regarding the band and meeting of maskers that would be of great benefit to him.

He also gave him the passwords of the band, and told him the circumstances under which they should be used.

The scout also changed the saddle and bridle he always used, for the hermit had several on hand.

Thus equipped, Buffalo Bill was ready for his very perilous venture, and, shaking hands with the Hermit Avenger, he said:

"You know what to do for me, Pard Nat, if I never come back; but I'm beginning to feel more and more like a cat with nine lives, so I'll turn up all right.

"Good-by and take care of yourself."

"I'm only a rough old pine-knot, Bill, ready to go, and you are the one to take care of yourself.

"God bless you, my boy, and good-by," and the voice of the old man grew husky with emotion.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LETTER DELIVERED.

Nemesis Nat was not a man to spare himself, and he was wont to say that he could start any day across the mountains and by night break down a relay of three horses.

He knew every cut, canyon and trail of the mountains, and by climbing up a cliff, or down one, he could cut many a mile off of a trail.

By climbing a tree against a cliff also he could lessen distance, and he had in several places made dug-outs, which he could descend or ascend the streams with, and cross them, thus causing the Indians to believe he could be in two spots at the same time.

Having left the scout going on his dangerous mission to the camp of the masked outlaws, Nemesis Nat started for the home of Judge Tremain.

To have taken the trail around, as a horseman would go, he would have had over forty miles to go over; but instead he cut across by the paths he knew so well and the distance was lessened by one-half.

An hour after he walked quietly up to the cabin of Hope Vale, the residence of Judge Tremain, paying no attention to the savage dogs that came rushing toward him.

The judge hastened out to protect his visitor, but found there was no need of it as the dogs found their master in the Hermit Avenger and a word of command from him had cowed them.

The judge gazed with real admiration up on the tall form, noble face and white locks and beard of the man who only lived to avenge his loved ones.

He had heard much of the strange man, but never seen him before.

"I believe I am welcoming one known as the Hermit Avenger, for I do not know your name?" the judge said, in his hearty way.

"Nemesis Nat they call me, sir; but my name is Nathaniel Norcross, or was away back in the days when I had use for one.

"You are Judge Tremain, I take it?"

There was a calm dignity about the hermit that impressed the judge most favorably, as also his wife, his daughter Myrtle and Blanche Vassar, a young girl whose guardian the judge was.

The judge introduced the ladies, and bade his visitor be seated, adding:

"We will have dinner soon, and you shall have a chance to freshen up; but sit down and rest a while first."

The hermit gazed about him, while the fire in his eyes was softened by a look of inexpressible sadness, and he said:

"I am not fit for ladies' society, Judge Tremain, for it is twenty years since I have been in their presence, and the last time I was under a roof, it was just such an afternoon as this, and in my own home.

"The next day the home was a ruin, my loved ones were dead, murdered by the Navahoes; so, ever since, I have been an avenger—no, I am not fit for the company of ladies. No, madam, my hand is too red-hued for you to touch, though, thank God, it is an honest hand! only I have dyed it with Indian blood in my insatiate love for revenge, to avenge my loved darlings."

There were tears in the eyes of Mrs. Tremain and the young girls, and Judge Tremain coughed to keep back the choking emotion that welled up in his throat.

It was Blanche Vassar who broke the silence. She was a beautiful girl. Her father, Carl Vassar, a bosom friend of Judge Tremain, had been murdered by a marauding band of Boys in Black some time before. The band had also attempted to kidnap Blanche, but she had been rescued by Buffalo Bill.

"You have done right to avenge those you loved, sir.

"My father was murdered, and never will I be happy until I feel that he has been avenged," she said. "None here blame you; we have all suffered too much for that, and we respect your misfortunes and give you our sympathy in your sorrows."

"Well said, Blanche. You have expressed just what I wished to," cried the judge, while the Hermit Avenger's face lighted up, and he said:

"They call you Blanche; then you are the one whom the outlaws attempted to kidnap?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do not trust yourself again alone, for you would have no more mercy shown you than if you fell into the hands of the Navahoes; but this scene of home, and the kind welcome I have received, caused me to forget that I came here on a mission, to give you this letter, sir, from one of Nature's noblemen, one upon whom God has set the seal of perfect manhood—Buffalo Bill," and the Hermit Avenger handed to Judge Tremain the letter given him by the scout.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HERMIT AVENGER'S RETURN.

The Hermit Avenger was more than pleased with the welcome given him, and while the judge read the scout's letter the three ladies did all they could to make him feel how welcome he was.

Mrs. Tremain led him to the guests' room, and old Uncle Toby, the negro man-of-all-work, was sent there to see to his wants.

Having brushed the dust of travel off, and refreshed himself, the hermit felt better and returned to the piazza to find the judge and the ladies discussing the scout's letter.

"You know the contents of this letter, Mr. Norcross?"

"Yes, judge."

"I hope that our daring friend Cody has not gone into another deadly undertaking, as I fear he has."

"Yes, I regret to say that he has gone upon the most perilous work of his life, sir, but I dare not say what it is where walls may have ears.

"The truth is, Judge Tremain, that this outlaw element pervades the very air of this frontier, and even in your beautiful valley homes there are spies who are allies to the outlaws.

"My lips are sealed, so that I cannot speak out, or act, for gratitude chains me to silence, but I will say here, as I feel that I can do so, that William Cody has gone to the outlaw camp in disguise, to attend a secret meeting, at which plans will be arranged for a rush upon this valley of over threescore lawless horsemen.

"Buffalo Bill will learn their plans, if he is not recog-

nized and put to death by torture, and my advice to you, sir, is to obey implicitly the instruction of his letter.

"Go yourself to see the leaders of the Vigilante and settler bands, and let them know how important quick action is to success.

"Let them keep their couriers, their trusted men only, ready to act at once when the time comes, and above all let them allow no man to leave camp save the couriers.

"If any man insists upon doing so, kill him as I would a Navaho, for he is not to be trusted in any way.

"The sooner you are ready to start on your rounds, sir, the better, and do not spare yourself or horseflesh.

"I will be at the Blind Canyon, awaiting orders from Cody, or messengers from you.

"I have been led to say more than I intended, and now I must be silent, for I will not betray, openly or secret, those I am bound to by the ties of gratitude; but I long for, hope for, pray for the successful wiping out of that lawless band without aid of mine.

"If he is not killed, Buffalo Bill will be the man who will utterly crush the Boys in Black, as they deserve to be, and bring peace upon your beautiful valley of homes."

The Hermit Avenger spoke earnestly, and the judge at once ordered his horse gotten ready, and Blanche insisted upon accompanying him, but this he would not allow.

Dinner was announced then, and the Hermit Avenger enjoyed for the first time, since he had sat at his own board, the pleasure of eating as a gentleman.

He relished his meal, talked well, but altogether of the far past, and when Blanche asked him if he knew the Man in Blue, answered, quietly:

"Oh, yes, I have met him."

"Can you tell me anything about him, sir?"

"I will leave that to Buffalo Bill to do, lady."

The judge offered a horse to the hermit to return on, but though it was at first refused, he accepted the offer when Blanche said:

"You might need him, and would, if Buffalo Bill returned with his horse used up."

"You are right, miss, and I will accept your kind offer, Judge Tremain."

They rode out of the yard together, the judge, with a cowboy as an escort, and the hermit, but they went separate ways soon after, returning to his post.

The judge rode rapidly on his mission to visit the other commands, and had sent a messenger to have his own men come to his ranch at once and go into camp.

He was determined to do as the hermit had said, spare neither himself nor horseflesh in carrying out the wishes of Buffalo Bill.

And Nemesis Nat, with this same aim in view, hurried back to his post at the Blind Canyon, arriving soon after nightfall.

CHAPTER XXIV.

* AN UNINVITED GUEST.

Buffalo Bill realized to the fullest extent all that he was doing in going to the camp of the Boys in Black.

He knew that only the black mask lay between him and recognition, which meant death.

He had gone only a few miles when he saw two horsemen turn into the trail ahead of him.

Neither was dressed in black, or rode black horses, but they wore the mask that concealed completely their identity.

"Here is a chance for company, such as it is," said the scout, and he hastened to overtake the two men ahead of him.

They turned quickly upon hearing him approach, and, seeing that he was "one of them," slackened rein.

"Ho, pards! bound for ther camp o' course," said Buffalo Bill, as he joined them.

"You bet we is, and I'm thinkin' thar'll be a big meetin'."

"Hope so; for I guesses that the chief means ter play a big game, and, from all I l'arn, he holds a handful o' trumps," said the scout.

"Yas, and it's time, for money hain't been over plentiful o' late, and I'm savin' mine ter git a chance ter go back East some day and cut a swell."

"Stretch a rope, yer means, Tom," growled his comrade.

"Shet up, won't yer, fer who wants ter hear talk o' ropes, Buck?" was the reply.

And Buffalo Bill mentally jotted down the names of "Buck" and "Tom" as pards of his.

He got on smoothly with the two, sharing his tobacco and a pull at a small flask, and found out all he wished to know about the two, while he made himself "solid" with them as simply "Bill," they not suspecting how much there was in a name.

Armed with two pards who knew the ropes and from whom he was learning much that was useful information, Buffalo Bill considered himself in luck, and at sunset rode into the Devil's Canyon.

Half a hundred men were already there, and the scout saw that about a third of them would remove their masks at will, while others kept them on constantly.

He saw, too, miners he had met before, cowboys, a settler or two, and, prominent among them, and who seemed to be a man of authority, was a well-known border character, the Giant Sport, of Trail End City; Circus Sam, who had once sent three hirelings out upon the track of himself, Allan Tremain and Dr. Donohue to murder them.

It did not take the scout long to discover that Circus Sam was an officer of the outlaw band, and though he had rigged himself up in black, he wore his mask hanging about his neck, as though he was anxious to let every one know just who he was.

There were other members dropping in constantly, and the Giant Sport gave orders that all should stake their horses out, form messes, and go regularly into camp, as the stay would not be, as was usually the case, for only a few hours, but for several days, as the chief was planning a grand move.

Buffalo Bill sought out his two traveling pards, Buck and Tom, and, as he had plenty of supplies, suggested that they get one other and mess together.

This was done, and the scout circulated freely about the camps, taking notes and allowing nothing to escape his observation.

It was just midnight when the bugle sounded, calling the outlaws to assemble, and Circus Sam went about announcing that the chief, Captain Black, had arrived.

Buffalo Bill went with the rest to the meeting place, and soon the chief appeared, clad in black and masked.

He was attended by several men who were similarly attired, only the chief had a red cord about his black sombrero, and a scarlet sash about his waist.

Whether he was white, black or redskin could not be told, so thoroughly was he masked.

In a voice distinct and with a ring to its rich tones, he called the meeting of the maskers to order, and then for an hour told of his plans, their successes, reverses, and the plot for the future, to avenge their dead comrades and to strike at the settlers in a way that would demoralize them.

He told of the new stage line that was to be put on the next week to Silver Thread, and showed that he had plotted to make each member of the band a rich man.

When at last the plans had all been told, the chief said that in the morning at nine each man was to assemble at his quarters and sign the new roll of the outlaws, to write down their names in the "Black Book," as he expressed it.

Buffalo Bill did not return immediately to his camp with the three outlaws.

He was seen hanging about the chief, and just as Tom, Buck and the other man were turning in he came back and said:

"Well, pards, I'm in hard luck, for the chief sends me off on a night ride, and a long one, and I'm fagged out now.

"You better keep my grub, as I won't need it."

"I don't envy you, Pard Bill," said Tom, and the others also gave him their sympathy, and he said:

"I'll meet you on the raid, pards."

Then he was off, and as no guards were kept, for none were supposed to be needed there, he went to his horse and slipped away in the darkness.

It was just half an hour before dawn, but he knew that the outlaws would sleep late, and he did not believe that he would be missed, for he well knew that his name was not down on the outlaw roll, and never would be written in the Black Book.

Suddenly he heard hooffalls behind him, and quickly he drew into the shelter of a thicket.

A moment after a party of five horsemen dashed by, and one was talking as they did so.

Standing with his hand upon the nose of his horse to prevent his neighing, Buffalo Bill heard the voice of the one in the lead, and just what he said as he passed.

"That is the chief's voice, and he goes ahead to prepare the way.

"So do I. I was an uninvited guest, but I fared very well."

And soon after the scout rode on, and when day dawned he was following the trail of the chief and his Boys in Black.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE FAIR COURIER.

Buffalo Bill followed the trail of the outlaw chief and his comrades until he felt sure where it would lead, and then he pressed on as rapidly as he dared to the Blind Canyon.

He had had no rest, but that did not matter, and his desire was to spare his horse all he could, until he reached the canyon, when he knew that the Hermit Avenger could make as good time as any animal could in bearing a message, and the scout felt that he had much to make known.

It was afternoon when he reached the Blind Canyon, and the Hermit Avenger was on the watch, and called out:

"Ho, Pard Bill, then you thought better of it after all, and I'm mighty glad that you did."

"Thought better of what, pard?"

"Going to Devil's Canyon."

"I have just returned from there. I overtook company on the way, attended the meeting last night at midnight, heard the chief's full plans of action and followed his trail to within ten miles back, where he branched off, but I know where he is going, so that is all right."

"I am back again, Nemesis Nat, was not even suspected, and am now ready for the work in hand which is to be to-morrow night just before dawn, the first strike being made at Hope Vale Ranch by the chief and his special band of Boys in Black, while Band Two attacks Silver Thread City and Band Three sweeps around to come in at the lower end of the valley."

"The ranches will then be raided, then the mines, and with their booty the outlaws were to go into hiding and await the result, and the starting of the stage line from Trail End City."

"Buffalo Bill, you have done wonders."

"But did you see the chief unmasked?"

"No, and there was no need to do so, as I know him."

"You are sure?"

"Perfectly."

"I have nothing to say, I will raise no hand to save, will let you carry out your destiny, which I feel is to crush this serpent of sin that is devastating this fair land and dotting it with the graves of good and brave men."

"Now, what will you do?"

"Await until night, when my horse will be rested, and then go to Judge Tremain's home, the Hope Vale Ranch."

"You need rest yourself, so take it, and when you wish to go I have a fresh horse for you, and a splendid animal he is; but you look haggard."

"I am hungry, pard, and a trifle sleepy."

The hermit took the hint and soon had dinner, telling the scout meanwhile how it was that he happened to have the fresh horse, through Blanche Vassar having urged it.

The scout ate heartily, then threw himself down for a rest, and just at sunset started to his feet as he heard the words:

"Is Buffalo Bill here, sir?"

"Miss Blanche, you here?" cried the scout, as he looked at the panting, foam-covered horse she had ridden.

"Yes, Buffalo Bill, and I come as a courier, for I have news for you."

In spite of her rapid ride she was very pale, yet perfectly calm.

Then she resumed:

"I do not know why, but in spite of all warnings I will risk my life to go to my father's grave. He is buried, you know, at a place called Monument Rock."

"I did so this morning, and fortunately saw some horsemen approaching and went into hiding."

"They halted near me, and I heard one of them give his orders to the other four to go into camp on the range and await his coming."

"He said he was going to Hope Vale Ranch to make a visit and lull suspicion, but would be back in ample time for action."

"Then I saw him distinctly, and I recognized him as he took off his black sombrero and mask—it was the Man in Blue."

"Yes, Miss Blanche, I heard him at midnight last night make all of his plans to hurl his cutthroats upon the valley, while he said that there was one prize in it that was for him alone, one that did not know him as he was."

"In order to lull suspicion he pretended to be captured by his own men some time ago when he had himself just rescued one of them from prison."

"The ranches he has he has murdered the owners of to thus inherit them in his peculiar way, and the mines are stolen property also."

"He is the worst of all men I ever met, and his doom is at hand."

"But did you come here alone to tell me this?"

"I did, and if you were not here to tell the Hermit Avenger."

"The Man in Blue has gone on to the home of Judge Tremain, to be a guest there, the snake in the grass that is to strike at our hearts, and let me tell you, Mr. Cody,

that I believe he is the man who murdered my father and who tried to kidnap me afterward.

"Mr. Cody, I shall return to Hope Vale, and all is in your hands, our lives are in your keeping, and we will rest content; but I am revengeful, and I do not wish to know that the Man in Blue dies as a brave man might, by bullet.

"He will be at Hope Vale upon my return and—shall I kill him?"

"Oh, no, or you will give him the very death you do not wish him to have.

"My horse is rested, so ride him back, and I have a fresh one your foresight got for me through the Hermit Avenger, and I return with you—yes, and Nemesis Nat will go, too."

"Not now, Bill, I'll follow later," was the reply, and after having supper in camp with them, the fair courier set off with Buffalo Bill for the long and rapid ride to Hope Vale Ranch.

CHAPTER XXVI.

RETRIBUTION.

There was the greatest anxiety felt for the safety of Blanche Vassar when night came on and she could not be found.

The judge had gone in search of her, with a couple of his men, but returned unsuccessful, and all were waiting the coming of dawn to begin a general search for the missing girl.

The Man in Blue had arrived in the afternoon and told how he had escaped from the outlaws, and that he could guide the Vigilantes to their retreats, when it was decided to go and attack them.

He seemed deeply distressed at the disappearance of Blanche, and said he would go with the searching party the next morning.

But just before midnight Blanche rode up to the door, and alone.

She simply said that she had taken a different trail, that she was utterly worn out, and with hardly a word to any one, acting as though dazed, she sought her room.

But once there she turned to Mrs. Tremain and Myrtle, who accompanied her, and said, quickly:

"I have not been lost, I am not alone.

"I rode to the Blind Canyon and Buffalo Bill is with me, but in hiding, awaiting to see the judge.

"The Man in Blue is the chief of the outlaw band, and we must dissemble to entrap him, for he is preparing to strike the settlement with his whole force, and it must not be prevented, for there must be no mistake, and Buffalo Bill has arranged for all."

The words of the young girl were heard with amazement, and real consternation; but Mrs. Tremain and Myrtle quickly rallied, the judge was sent for and the story told to him, while Myrtle, with great presence of mind, went out upon the piazza, and told the Man in Blue that Blanche was much better, though very tired, and she hoped would be all right in the morning.

But in the morning Blanche still kept her room, for she would not face the murderer of her father, as she said:

"I could not resist the temptation to kill him, Myrtle."

After breakfast the Man in Blue took a ride alone, and he went to the Monument Rock to communicate with his men in hiding there, and tell them that all was ready for the strike, that he would be on the scene, as the guest of the judge, and when they arrived would place himself at their head.

He returned for dinner to find that the judge had gone to Silver Thread City, but he was not told that Buffalo Bill had been his companion thither.

It was late when the judge returned, and he did not consider it necessary to tell the Man in Blue that Buffalo Bill and his Vigilantes had come back with him, and were in hiding nearby.

Not having been able to see Blanche, the Man in Blue returned to his room, when Mrs. Tremain and Myrtle said good-night.

But a moment after he had entered there came a knock at his door, and Buffalo Bill entered.

"Hands up, pard, for I want Captain Black, the outlaw chief, and you are the man."

The scout's revolver covered the outlaw, and through the window were thrust several rifles, as the Volunteer Vigilantes backed up the scout.

"There is some terrible mistake here, Captain Cody; but I submit, of course, as in the morning I will show you how cruel is your charge against me."

The words were calmly uttered, but the scout said:

"You hope to give proof by the appearance of your band, but within two hours more they will ride into a trap there will be no escape from, Circus Sam and his

party will be ambushed on the way to Silver Thread, and your third party will be headed off at the lower end of the valley.

"I was at your meeting in Devil's Canyon, Man in Blue, with a heart of red and black, and I know all, and Miss Blanche Vassar listened to your orders to your men at Monument Rock.

"Now, what proof can you give that you are not flying false colors?"

"None. I make no defense, for I see you have won the game, Buffalo Bill.

"I should have killed you when I discovered that you came to this valley to hunt me down.

"But the traitor has been the old hermit, Nemesis Nat."

"It is false, for he would not betray you."

"I say that he has, and I wish you to tell him from me that which will crush his old heart—that I am his grandson, the son of his daughter who ran away with the organist of his church.

"Tell him that she told me, her child, of the dishonor upon me, that she reared me to be bad.

"She is dead now, and I, her son, with a clouded name, have drifted from bad to worse, until I am indeed fit only to die on the gallows.

"You have won the game, Buffalo Bill, so do your worst, and tell Nemesis Nat that I avenge myself for his betrayal by breaking his old heart."

Buffalo Bill glanced quickly around him, to see that the judge, Blanche, Allan Tremain and Dr. Donohue alone had heard the words of the outlaw chief.

Then he said, sternly:

"Bring a gag for this man, and remember it must not be taken from his mouth without Mr. Tremain's orders, for that old man's heart shall not be crushed by this fiend's revengeful confession."

The scout's order was obeyed, the man was gagged and led away in the care of two Vigilantes called to guard him to their camp.

Half an hour after, Allan Tremain came in quickly, and cried:

"I could not save him—the Vigilantes hanged him, gagged as he was, when they discovered that the Man in Blue was the outlaw chief."

"Then his tongue is silenced forever—it is better so.

"Now we will ride to meet his band, and Buffalo Bill

led the way from the house, the others following, among them the judge, who would not remain behind when men were needed at the front.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

Into the traps set for them went the three separate bands of Boys in Black, and the result was short, sharp and deadly work.

When the sun rose over the beautiful Valley of the Silver Thread, the settlers were wild with joy, for the Boys in Black had simply been wiped out, in the terrible excitement and triumph of the hour, men refusing to listen to reason and humanity and hanging up the wounded outlaws.

If any escaped, no one in the settlement knew of the fact.

Buffalo Bill's duty was done, he had accomplished the work upon which he had been sent single-handed by Colonel Royall, and several days after the "massacre of the outlaws," as it was called, he started upon his return to the military post where he was chief of scouts.

But before he went he was glad to feel that old Nemesis Nat, not knowing what his grandson—Belford Fontaine, *alias* Ford Belmont—had confessed, had consented to give up his wild life as an avenger and take charge of the Vassar Ranch, which had been left to Blanche Vassar by her murdered father, as manager.

It was a year after that Buffalo Bill was again seen in the Silver Thread, but not on the war trail this time, for he had been called thither to attend a double wedding, as Myrtle Tremain had consented to become Mrs. Dallas Donohue, while Blanche Vassar had discovered that it was Allan Tremain that she had always loved.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 89, will contain "Buffalo Bill and the Outcasts of Yellow Dust City; or, Fighting for Life in the Blizzard." Buffalo Bill rescues a band of miserable outcasts. His adventures in the greatest of all the terrible blizzards that ever ravaged the Northwest are told in this story.

The incidents in his career that won for him his title—"King of the Blizzard"—make great reading on a winter's night by a good warm fire while the wind howls outside as it did in those terrible days the great scout spent in the wilderness of snow.

CURIOUS DREAMS



More dreams. Lots of them.
The more the merrier.
Look over the list of prizes on page 31.
Then you'll get to work harder than ever.
Make this contest the banner one.

A Dream of Diamonds.

(By Frank Pelkey, Wyoming, Iowa.)

Here is a dream I had about a week ago. I had just got to sleep, when I seemed to awake. A man was coming in the window. He had a large letter that he handed to me. I opened it, and it said to come to the president at once. I put on my clothes and we crawled out of the window. There was a large box near, that he said was an automobile. We got in. He put on steam and we were soon at the White House. The president told me he had a secret to tell me. He whispered in my ear a while, then turned to the wall and opened a curious door. I walked through the door and was instantly seized and carried to a large, black man. He was the king of a certain nation. He took me to a large vault where there were sacks of money and of diamonds. He gave me a sack of diamonds and told me to go. I was safely on my way home when an officer accused me of stealing the diamonds. I tried my best to get away, but my legs refused to move. The officer grabbed me and threw me into a hole. I landed with a jar. I awoke, and found I had fallen out of bed, but I still held to my sack of diamonds, which turned out to be my pillow.

This is a true dream.

Led by a Dream Spirit.

(By John Felix Webster, Greenville, Texas.)

I have a chum who had been spending the evening with me. At eleven o'clock he mounted his pony (Light-weight) and started homeward, riding full gallop, and I proceeded to my room, but ere I had retired, I heard him ride up to the gate calling to me. I went out, hoping in my heart that some one had tried to hold him up, and

that he had come for me to assist in pursuit of the highwaymen. We were constantly hoping for an opportunity to show what heroes we were born. I was disappointed to find he had lost his eyeglasses. An overhanging branch from one of the large trees had brushed them off his eyes, wounding his left eye. At the same time I picked up a light, and together we searched for an hour diligently, but in vain. The glasses could not be found. We were forced to give up in disgust. My chum went home with only his pony to lead the way through the midnight darkness. I retired, and soon fell asleep, wondering why we had failed to find the glasses, and a strange vision appeared to me in a dream. I was suddenly awakened to find myself resting in a snow-white hammock, dotted here and there with silver and gold spangles, suspended across a deep, clear running stream, secured at each end by a slender, gold thread to stones of gigantic size, and upon them were sitting hundreds of the funniest little creatures resembling human beings, only so small. They were chatting in an animated manner. I tried in every way to speak to them, but I could not move or speak for hours, it seemed to me; when, out of their midst came a beautiful being, clad in pale-green velvet all shining in diamonds. She came nearer and yet nearer, and I seemed to catch my breath quickly. Nearer came this dazzling vision, when I felt a light caress fall upon my forehead, for my eyes had closed, so bright had this vision become; and into my hand was pressed a fine silken tissue veil, and a low, mellow voice distinctly said: "Behold! The lost is found." My sleeping charge, the veil or scarf within my hand began to unroll itself, forming a square shape, representing a landscape, and, to my utmost astonishment, I saw our own home, the avenue of stately trees, the flowers, the garden; everything was perfect. While I gazed, spellbound, I saw a living figure slowly cover the scene for an instant, then disappear. When up from the shrubbery beneath a large oak tree, there arose a pale-

green star, gradually becoming brighter until it assumed the likeness of the sun. Then, slowly, it descended, until it rested upon a certain shrub beneath the oak tree, one point of the star reaching downward. Again I heard that soft, sweet voice: "The lost is found." I started to rush toward the spot, to suddenly land on my feet, wide awake, with my sister laughing at my sudden leap out of bed. I scrambled into my clothes, breathlessly called to her to leave off laughing and follow me, and I would show her I had seen a strange thing. She ran after me, I speeding to the locality of my dream. On and on I ran, until I reached the oak, at least fifty yards from where the glasses were brushed off. Without a doubt or a moment's hesitation I reached forth my hand and parted the grasses and shrubbery. There, glistening in the sunlight, nestling in a bed of dew-drops, were my chum's lost glasses.

This a true repetition of a dream I had, June 4th, 1902.

An Adventure in Dreamland.

(By John Andreoli, Rosebank, N. Y.)

One night, two years ago, I dreamed I fell asleep on the prairie, and I awoke to find myself in the hands of the Apaches, or Horse Indians. They tied me to a stake and placed resinous wood under and about me, and then lit it. The braves amused themselves by throwing tomahawks and shooting arrows at me, until I closely resembled a porcupine. The squaws followed the example set to them by the warriors, by throwing stones and jabbing pointed sticks into me.

At a sign from the chief, the fire was extinguished, the arrows drawn out, and I was bathed and unbound, and told that I had to run the gantlet. Two rows of braves, with a dozen braves to each row, stood facing one another. Each was armed with a club or a tomahawk, and as I ran through them, every one dealt me a blow, not ever gently, which gave me a thorough knowledge of astronomy.

The stars which I saw were of every shade and hue; talk about Jupiter or Saturn, why, some had sixteen moons and some had so many rings I couldn't see the planet at all; and, besides, I am sure many were inhabited, for I noticed a fellow making faces at me and laughing at my predicament. Somehow I reached the end of the lines without being knocked down, so I started to "foot it" cross country with a score of savages in my wake, yelping like a pack of hounds after a fox. A very fat Indian was already grasping me by the hair, when I ran over a cliff and fell into the ocean.

As I was falling I gave a prolonged shriek which the Indians call the "death yell."

My shriek aroused a school of sharks which were basking in the sun, and the sharks started in pursuit where the Indians left off.

The leader, an enormous fellow, soon dove and came up under me, took me in his capacious mouth and swallowed me.

I then found myself in a dingy room, the lamp was turned down, and I dropped down on a chair, exhausted from my exertions.

When rested I turned up the light, and saw that the

table was set for some one's supper, and a late one at that, for the clock on the shelf struck forty-seven. On the same shelf was a bottle of witch hazel wrapped in a Buffalo Bill Weekly. I took the witch hazel, for it was just the thing I needed, as I was bruised and sore all over. I then sat down to enjoy the bountiful meal and read the weekly.

No sooner had I taken up the knife and fork than the shark performed the same service to me as the whale did to Jonah (why didn't the pesky beast wait till I had finished, for I was famished and the meal didn't cost me anything?), I was thrown up on the shores, but near my own home. Jonah wasn't so lucky. I went home to bed and woke up next morning as well as ever, but to this day I sincerely regret the loss of that supper.

A Dream of Skulls.

(By R. Morrison, Wayne, Pa.)

Here is a dream I had one afternoon.

I had just been visiting the Academy of Natural Science in Philadelphia. When I arrived at home I was so tired that I lay down and fell asleep. I soon found myself and my chum, Harold Morris, crossing a field. My chum disappeared, and I was left alone. Skulls of dead men seemed to be moving around my head. Seeing a club near, I picked it up and struck all the skulls as they came in turn. Seeing a smaller skull than the rest, I struck it so hard that I broke it. Then boney hands seemed to lift me into the air. They would carry me up into the air and let me fall again. They had just let me fall the second time, when I woke up. Gee! wasn't I scared, though!

A Close Call.

(By D. Lane, Augusta, Ark.)

It was about eight o'clock one dark night in the latter part of December, and I had retired early. Suddenly I heard the fire-bell ringing loudly. Clang! clang! clang!

I sprang to my feet and dressed myself quickly. Out into the darkness and storm I rushed madly. Far to the north I saw huge flames leaping wildly into the air, and giving the dark clouds a reddish hue. The scene was appalling. I was running at full speed, and now I came up with some one. "Where is the fire?" I asked, anxiously. "Across the river on the north side," was the answer. On, on, on I dashed, until I came to the railroad bridge across the river. I stepped on the bridge and started across. I was about halfway across when I heard, to my horror, the shriek of an engine. Looking around, I saw an approaching train. I began to run. The train dashed on the bridge, the engineer trying with all his might to stop it. I was about one hundred feet from the opposite side of the bridge and the train was only a few feet away. One hundred feet below me the river foamed madly. I knew I must jump, so I prepared myself for the leap. When the train was only about five yards away, I sprang forward. Instead of going down into the black river water, I fell heavily to the

floor—and awoke. It was only a dream and I was at home safe and sound, except for a knock on my head which I received when I rolled from the bed.

A Fishing Dream.

(By D. R. Nelms, Washington, D. C.)

This is what I dreamed last night, Nov. 5th:

It was quite late when I retired, and I hoped I would not be visited by a dream, as I often am.

I dreamed that I was fishing, when all of a sudden my cork went under and I couldn't pull the fish in or I couldn't turn the pole loose. The fish pulled so hard that I was pulled overboard. After I touched the water, it seemed as if a deep sleep took me, which lasted several days. When I woke out of this imaginary sleep I was on an island, sitting down on the beach crying. I didn't know where I was. Presently an old man passed and asked me what I was doing. I told him I didn't know. He asked me how came I there. I didn't know. He wanted to know my name, but I didn't know anything about myself or anything. He said I was crazy, but he would teach me some sense. He grabbed me by the arm and took me inland, to a small house. He carried me in and gave me some milk and honey. I ate it and he then told me to follow him. He took two fishing poles, and then went through the woods to the other side of the island, took me in a boat and paddled a long way out in the stream. Then we began to fish, and we were catching fish as fast as we could pull them in, but, suddenly, I was pulled overboard again and I tried hard to get back in the boat, but could not. I was under water, going so fast that it made me right dizzy. This sailing under water lasted for several hours, when, all at once, I bumped into the shore, which awoke me.

When I awoke, I got up and looked at the clock, and found that I hadn't been asleep but fifteen minutes, and it seemed to me as if I had been asleep a week.

Only a Dream.

(By Commodore Wilson, Anderson, Ind.)

I was traveling the streets in the heart of Chicago, strolling around, no place in particular, when, by chance, I saw a young lady waiting for a car, and, being attracted by a sweet smile, I offered to relieve her of her bundles.

In time, we boarded the car and were in a jolly conversation until our destination was reached. She invited me in, and, after laying aside her wraps, she sat down and produced a box of cigarettes and, after offering me one, proceeded to light one for herself; after these were consumed, she opened a bottle of wine, of which we drank, and in the meantime she was describing Chicago to me. While telling of the beautiful parks, we were interrupted by footsteps, and, with a look of terror, she exclaimed: "My husband!"

I was too surprised to speak, when she said: "Quick! Into the pantry!" and I lost no time in getting there, for the man was nearing the door.

He came in and looked around.

"There has been some one here," he said.

"How do you know?"

"I smell cigarette smoke, and there are the wine-glasses on the stand!"

"You must be mistaken!"

"No, I'm not, and I'm going to find him!" So he pulled a huge revolver from his pocket and started on the search, looking under the beds and in every nook and corner.

At last he came back to the room where she was standing, and said: "There's only one place left that he can be, and that's the pantry."

I made up my mind that as soon as he opened the door I would knock him down and make my escape.

He came nearer, and I stood trembling, waiting for the door to open, thinking to myself that this would be my last day in the city, if I could only escape.

Oh! he opened the door, and I struck at him with all my might, but, alas! I had hit the bed-post. A cold sweat stood upon my brow as I realized it was only a dream.

The Green Clouds.

(By Roscoe B. Parrish, Iuka, Kansas.)

It was nearly sunset when I saw green clouds floating around in the sky. I asked my mother what was the cause of it. She said it was the sign of snow. The clouds got thicker and thicker. It began to snow. Then I woke up and found it was a dream.

A True Dream.

(By Charles A. Pugh, Deshler, Ohio.)

I went to bed one night last October after reading a story about the coal strike. I dreamed I was out in the coal fields working as a non-union miner, and was just sneaking to work when I was hit on the head by some hard club and fell on the ground unconscious. When I came to, an enemy that I had not seen, I thought, for about ten years, was standing over me. He started telling me what a good chance he had to finish me, when he heard a slight noise just behind him. He turned and just as he did so I raised up, and hit him with the club he had hit me with. I thought he was instantly killed, when a stone hit me in the back and I woke up. My roommate said he had been trying to get me awake for ten minutes, and the blow in the back was made by the pillow he hit me with.

Out Camping.

(By James McGarvey, Philadelphia, Pa.)

I have had lots of dreadful dreams, and sometimes I would be afraid to go to sleep again. One of them was:

This summer when I was visiting Hazleton, where my grandmother lives, myself and a lot of my playmates, went to the woods to camp for a day. That night when I came home I had an awful dream. I thought that, while we were out camping, some Indians and savages

came and stood around our tent. We were so surprised we did not know what to do. Then they all halloed and sang a war-song and danced around the tent. We then got our revolvers and were ready for the attack when they all rushed in on us. I was so frightened and afraid of them, I did not know what to do. But, after a moment's thought, we fired, and, turning around, we saw two of the Indians lying dead. When the others saw we were so brave they turned and fled. We then left that part of the woods and went about a mile out farther. We had no sooner settled there when we saw two large bears approaching our camp. I got my gun and fired, but only shot one bear; then one of the other boys killed the other. We went out and got them, and, besides a full supply of meat to last us for a long time, we had two nice, warm bear skins.

I then dreamed that we camped for two more weeks, and we were just breaking up camp when my mother called me, and said that I had been talking about bears and Indians. A few weeks after that we got a letter from my uncle, who is out West, and he told us that he had been attacked by some Indians and not long after by two great big bears. It seems strange to think how I dreamed of the attack and then heard of a real story like my dream.

With the Outlaws!

(By Royal Parkinson, Hortonville, Mass.)

About three weeks ago I had a dream of being in the mountains. There I met a band of Mexicans and with them they had a prisoner. They tied him to a tree and heaped brush around him, and then set it afire. While he was burning the Mexicans beat him with clubs till he was dead.

Then I woke up, but thought nothing of it.

But November 10th I had the same dream again, the only difference was, instead of being in the mountains, it was in the room next to my own bedroom.

A Bloody Dream.

(By Sam Goldstein, Glenwood, Colo.)

I was walking along the street, when I heard my name called. I turned around and there was a lady standing across the street calling me. I went over and she said she had seen me at a dance when I didn't know a thing about her. She asked me to come upstairs and see the little flat she had rented. I went up and looked around, and when I wanted to go she asked me to have a little wine. So I sat down and drank a glass. Presently she said she wanted to leave the room. She went out and locked it from the outside. She had been gone a half an hour, then an hour, and so on, till it was nearly dawn, and there I was sitting and waiting. I got tired of waiting, so I thought I would explore around a little. I got up and went through a door into a room that was all papered. Thinking there might be some secret door, I tapped all around the room and the last tap opened a door leading into a bed-room. On the bed was a lady all covered with blood, and, at first sight, I knew why the lady

had locked me in, to accuse me of murdering this lady. I retraced my steps, and when I entered the last room, there was the other woman with two policemen, and, pointing at me, said:

"That is the fellow who murdered her."

And then, then—I woke up.

Almost Scalped.

(By C. L. Evans, Danville, Va.)

I have been an interested reader of the Buffalo Bill Stories, from the first one up to the present time, which I think caused me to have the following dream:

I wandered out West in search of a fortune. On my way I came up with Buffalo Bill. He was a scout, and proposed to take me along with him. I readily consented, for I would rather be with him than any one else in the West. The next morning we started on a journey together into the Indian country. We camped at a spring under a bluff the first night. The next morning when we awoke it was to find that we were surrounded by Indians. We had no chance to get away, so had to surrender. Buffalo Bill told me not to be scared, as it was not the first time they had had him in their power, and he had always managed to get away. The Indians seemed to be highly delighted at having the long-haired chief in their power. They danced and beat drums around us until I was most ready to faint, but Buffalo Bill just laughed at it all. They told us they would burn us until we were most dead, and then they would scalp us. Buffalo Bill still laughed, as if it amused him, and told me that he was where he had been before, but he still had his scalp on. At last they got tired of dancing around us and took us to a post and tied both of us to it, and commenced to pile up brush around us, and then on the farther side from us they set it afire. It burned nearer and nearer, until it was near enough to scorch us. Buffalo Bill cheered me until the fire got to us. I thought my time had come. The fire was so hot I could not get my breath. After we were burned speechless, an old Indian chief ran in and tore the fire away from around us, so he could scalp us. He said he would scalp me first, and caught hold of my hair with one of his hands. In the other he had a long, keen knife. I fell over in Buffalo Bill's arms and seized him around the waist. I reached up with one hand to catch the Indian's knife, to find—the cat trying to climb onto the bed by my hair.

Attacked by Indians.

(By John Scott, St. Hyacinthe, Quebec.)

I dreamed one night that I was out of a job and could not get work. I traveled till I reached New York. I had not been long there when I saw a fellow acting suspiciously. I followed him to a railroad. As I was passing a box car I was struck on the head by the man I was following; then I was bound and gagged, and thrown into a box car. Soon after I heard the door close, and the car move. I worked at my bonds for a long time and at last I untied them. I then kicked open the end of

the keg and found that it was powder; then I broke a box and ate some biscuits. Just then the railroad bridge broke and we all went to the bottom. I quickly got a piece of string to use as a fuse. I stuck it in the powder and applied a match to it. By this time the water had half filled the car. As the powder was about to explode I dove. When I came up I was in the open air. I swam to shore and, after walking a while, I came to a log cabin. I entered, and upon looking around I saw an old woman. I went toward her and spoke to her. She told me not to take anything or to speak while in the cabin. Soon after three devils came in and offered me some things to eat, and, as I did not touch them, I was pinched and tortured. I did not cry out, so I was left alone. I got up and went out. The old woman handed me a knife and revolver. I thanked her, and went on my way. I had not gone far when I was attacked by Indians. I fought till I felt the vise-like grip of a brave on my wind-pipe, and then I gave a yell and woke up. I was very glad to find that I was safe.

My Awful After Effects.

(By Harold Miley, Allegheny, Pa.)

About three weeks ago I had a dream that proved funny for my roommate, but not so for me. I had gone to bed early and just after finishing an account of a fire in the paper. I dreamed that our house was on fire but that I could not leave until I had gotten everything belonging to me out. The heat was something awful and I could not breathe freely for the smoke, and so real did it all seem to me that I got up and began to put my clothes into the trunk. I thought I had put everything in and was closing my trunk in a hurry when I got my thumb between the lid and the body of the trunk and then the fire was all over, but my thumb still keeps in my mind the awakening from my dream, as it is broken.

The Shipwreck.

(By Emery Davis, Neligh, Neb.)

It was only recently when I had a frightful dream. I had been working hard all day and was very tired. I went to bed very early, and had no sooner got in bed than I began to dream. I dreamed that I was in a boat going across the ocean, there were a number of passengers on board the vessel. I got in a conversation with a young gentleman, who was about sixteen years of age. About half-past nine in the night the ship struck a large stone in the ocean which split her square in two. All the people on the ship were drowned except me and the boy I had got acquainted with. We escaped by clinging to a piece of plank which was lying loose on the ship. We drifted with the wind till after twelve o'clock, when, all of a sudden, we bumped against something. It was a boat and there was a man in it. He was a large man and had but one eye, and that was in the middle of his head. He was going to kill us, but we begged so hard to have mercy on us and let us tell him our story that he at last said that he would listen. So I told him

of our journey and he let us go on. We came to an island in a little while, however, and, getting off on the shore, we found that wild animals were all around by the shore. We watched for a chance, and ran for a tree. We climbed toward the top as fast as we could. As I started first, I was the first to reach the top of the tree, where I looked down and was horrified to see my partner being dragged down and eaten up by a large animal. I crawled as far up as I could, but the same large animal came up and dragged me down. When I hit the ground I woke up, and found myself out of bed on the floor. I did not go to sleep any more that night, for it was five o'clock in the morning.

The Game on the Gridiron.

(By Glenn Parrish, Indianapolis, Ind.)

I was playing football all day and went to bed very tired, and dreamed I was playing right half-back, and the quarter-back gave the signal, 13—18—24—31. It was for me to go around the right end. I cleared the end and had a clear field before me excepting the full-back, who was a big, heavy boy, who came charging at me like a mad bull. I ran harder, but my legs refused to go faster, and I made one more effort and ran right into one of the goal posts. Just then I woke up and I had my pillow under my arm and I had bumped my head on the bedstead. It was a hot game, I tell you.

LETTERS FROM PRIZE WINNERS

Philadelphia, Nov. 9th, 1902.

Street & Smith.

DEAR SIR: I received your hunting ax and I think it is a beauty. I did not expect such a present as this is. That was the first Buffalo Bill book that I ever read, and I think they are great books. I thank you for your present for the dream I sent you. I will try in the next contest, and hope I will be successful in this, also. I have shown the ax to many of my playmates, and they think it is a peach also, and they said they would start and read the Buffalo Bill Weekly and see if they couldn't win something in the contests. I received the ax O. K.

Yours respectfully,

WM. T. CONWAY.

Norfolk, Va., Dec. 10, 1902.

DEAR SIR: I thank you very much for the knife. It is just what I wanted, and a beauty. I am very proud of it and wish you ail and your paper great success. I am very sincerely yours,

N. E. ROBERTS.

 \$1 worth of Trunks & Make-ups, sent postpaid for 25 cents stamps or silver. Also Mouthwash or Fall Beard, Irish or Ride Whiskers, any cooler, bottle Spirit Gum to stick them on. Box of Burnt Cork to blacken up. 100 Rubber Mouth big teeth, secret & apparatus for performing the great vanishing half-dollar trick. This big offer is to get your address to send my large list, only if you play, wig, tricks & acts. Latest novelties. Mention paper you saw this in and I will also put in a Heavy GOLD plate finger ring FREE, send also. Address Chas. Marshall, 257, Lockport, N. Y.

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- 64—Buffalo Bill's Dead-Shot Pard; or, The Will-o'-the-Wisp of the Trails.
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- 67—Buffalo Bill's Best Bower; or, Calling the Turn on Death Notch Dick.
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